A REVIEW OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

EDITED BY A. NORMAN JEFFARES

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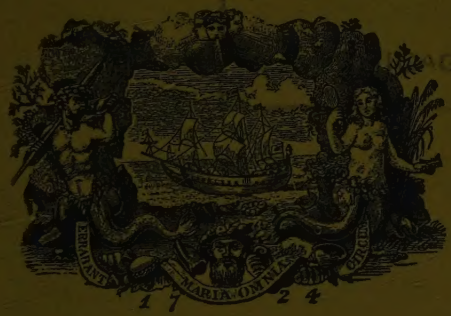

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VOLUME ONE NUMBER THREE JULY 1960

EDITOR: A. NORMAN JEFFARES

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Editorial

THE role of humanists in this scientific and technological age is often a difficult one, and sometimes it is not made easier by the ostrich-like attitudes of some of those who teach the humanities. The conservation of knowledge, the appreciation of the masterpieces of the past against which are weighed the productions of the present, the inculcation of taste by the exercise of judgement, all of those activities rest upon the extension of knowledge. Many ways exist in which this can be brought about, but they all demand, upon the part of the humanist, some degree of dedication.

Dedication, to be effective, ought to depend upon knowledge of what is involved in it, since it is often more difficult to see what stand humanists should adopt in larger countries where their presence is taken for granted, most of all by those who are themselves humanists. When the population of a country is about the ten million mark, the problem of providing the sheer diversity of intellectual skills and subtleties required to keep up the complications of contemporary civilisation forces men to question more closely the kind of education, the kind of thinking, the kind of living they are to adopt for themselves and for the future.

In such questionings, ultimately common to all technological countries where it becomes cheaper to buy new shoes than repair old, the belief will inevitably be held by many an otherwise worthy person that humane studies are themselves dispensable luxuries. For research in them will not carry the authority of a discovery, say, that brain damage is due to the accumulation of unmetabolised phenylalanine. Indeed research in the humanities tends to resemble re-soling and re-heeling; it generally consists of examination and criticism of ideas, the reassessment and reinterpretation of masterpieces.

Humanists in Canada and Australia have had to face a danger that the needs of the scientists and technologists will crowd out

creative curiosity in the humanities. The Rockefeller Foundation assisted the Canadians to produce *The Humanities in Canada* (1947), and the Australians to produce *The Humanities in Australia* (1959). Following the Canadian Report came the Massey Royal Commission, and because of it the spending of large sums 'to rank Canada as a civilised nation'; in Australia a similar Royal Commission is now being canvassed, which may, its sponsors hope, do as much for the arts there.

These two pilot reports have lessons for all who are concerned lest a merely technological society sweep us into a life of inhuman efficiency; civilised scientists recognise the danger as well as anyone and indeed better than many humanists. Their remedies may not however be the best ones for the situation, for some of them favour only the humanities subjects that 'service' scientific studies; yet the liberal arts would be untrue to themselves and their birthright if they no longer saw their work as an end in itself.

All humanists, then, should dedicate themselves to the pleasant and challenging task of making their knowledge and their highly developed imaginative judgement fully and readily available to technologists and scientists: this will help to civilise specialisation in both science *and* arts. Our industrialised societies can avoid being reduced to efficient organisations for feeding and housing healthy human animals only if enough of their finest intelligences continue to devote themselves to studying and interpreting the best of the arts of the past and to recognising what is good in our own age.

Our struggle, in fact, is for interdependence between science and humanity. If the humanist buries his head in the pedantry of teaching his tradition only to other would-be humanists then, after the scientists have passed him by, he will emerge to see around him arid deserts of drudgery. For the scientist as well as the creative humanist can continue to enjoy throughout his life the literature which has given us an ability to travel widely among extremes of men and societies, to explore imaginatively the heights and depths of man's intellectual and emotional aspiration and action. Even in the most mechanical of ages mankind cannot afford to neglect his proper study. A.N.J.

The Squire's Yeoman

EARLE BIRNEY

UNIQUE among the portraits of the pilgrims in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, the Yeoman's appears to carry no implications either of social criticism or personal satire or even of Chaucer's sly casual humour. The account of the Knight, the nearest to it in these respects, does at least convey, by its one lapse into negative phrasing, the suggestion that not all knights of the day avoided saying 'vileynye . . . unto no maner wight'. And the Knight, though idealised, has a military career extremely specific, even if chronologically bewildering. The Yeoman, however, has no biography; we do not know who he is, where he fought, nor what he says or thinks. J. M. Manly was forced to relegate him to a category of 'thin, shadowy figures', along with the plowman and the gildsmen.[1] Yet the plowman is given no physical description and the five tradesmen are not honoured with separate ones, whereas the Yeoman is visualised most precisely and colourfully—considerations which may have led Manly, later, to call him 'a purely decorative figure'.[2] Nevertheless, Chaucer does not content himself with mere decorativeness elsewhere in the *Prologue*, and it may be profitable to take another look at the Yeoman to consider whether he may not be more than a mere tapestry archer, and to be functionally, even ironically, related to the characters who precede him.

Ambiguities undoubtedly exist from the opening words of the portrait, though not necessarily of the sort Chaucer intended. 'A Yeman hadde he . . .'—but who had him? Since Tyrwhitt we have grown used to referring the pronoun, in a back-leap over the twenty-three lines of the Squire's portrait, to the ending of the

[1] *Some New Light on Chaucer*, 1926, pp. 253, 257.

[2] Ed. *Canterbury Tales*, 1929, p. 503.

Knight's, a grammatical acrobatic without precedent in Chaucer; nor is it justified by the later supposition, unsupported by any textual authority, that Chaucer wrote the Squire's portrait later, inserted it between the Knight's and the Yeoman's, and forgot to make the jointure pronominally snug.[1] Skeat, certainly, objected: 'Tyrwhitt . . . overlooks the fact that both the squire and the squire's man were necessarily servants to the knight, who, in this way, really had *two* servants, just as . . . he had *three* horses.'[2] What none of the commentators has considered, however, is that this Yeoman might have been conceived by Chaucer, at this moment of the juncture of the pilgrims, as peculiarly adapted to the service of the Squire, and the Squire only.

'A Yeman hadde he . . .'—but what is a 'yeman'? Chaucer used the word variously; as a synonym for 'bailly' (*Friar's Tale*, III: 1380 ff., 1396); or to denote an alchemist's apprentice (*Canon's Yeoman's Tale*); or, in the phrase 'estaat of yomanrye', to refer to nothing much more than the pretensions to self-importance of a prospering village miller (*Reeve's Tale*, I: 3939).[3] But when he used it in relation to a knight or a squire, Chaucer could not avoid, and must have intended, specifying a 'youngman' who, in the hierarchy of attendance upon a feudal household, occupied the grade next above grooms and pages and next below sergeants and squires; immediately above the latter were the knights; and all were, in their degrees, attendants on their feudal lord.[4] In this

[1] Thos. Tyrwhitt, ed. *Canterbury Tales*, 1775, iv, 195. Cf. A. W. Pollard, ed. *General Prologue*, 1903, p. 39; F. N. Robinson, ed. *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn. (Boston), 1957, p. 653; E. T. Donaldson, ed. *Chaucer's Poetry* (New York), 1958, p. 8n. The proposal that the Squire's portrait was a later insertion was made by Carleton Brown, 'The Squire and the Canterbury pilgrims', *M.L.N.*, xlix, 1934, 216–22.

[2] *Notes to the Canterbury Tales*, 2nd edn. (Oxford), 1900, note to line 101. Skeat adds that his view was taken by Warton, Strutt and Todd.

[3] References throughout are to Robinson's edn. 'Estaat of yomanrye' is glossed by Donaldson, p. 132, as 'status as a small landowner', but there is no evidence that Symkyn owned land and very little likelihood that a fourteenth-century village miller would. In any case, this concept of a yeoman is later; see below.

[4] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'yeoman', I.1. Chaucer's yeoman is here instanced, with proper caution, to illustrate only the meaning of 'an attendant or assistant to an official, etc.'.

ladder of service a yeoman might indeed find himself assigned occasionally to the role of personal servitor to a knight or even a king, but surely just as often to the person ranking next above him, a squire.

Certainly, at different periods in his life the same yeoman would play different parts: huntsman-forester, knight's body-guard, squire's attendant, lord's retainer, king's foot-soldier, according to his luck and his talents; but in none of these roles would he be, on the one hand, a mere 'servant' in the modern sense,[1] nor, on the other, a completely independent personage. In the fourteenth century he was, as the most thorough investigator into his status, Margaret Campbell, has defined him, 'a person giving not menial but honourable service, . . . that half-military, half-personal type of service characteristic of feudal and semi-feudal relationships'.[2] He would not, in consequence, be likely to choose and furnish his more formal dress or his martial equipment, as did the more prosperous freeholding 'yeoman' of later times.[3] On the battlefield, in the retinue of an ordinary knight, he might well be a plain archer, not necessarily mounted, equipped only with a longbow, two quivers of arrows, and a sheath knife or similar weapon for in-fighting. Anything more, even a sword and buckler, was a luxury which many soldiers of Crécy and Poitiers were not given and could not themselves afford to provide.[4]

The fact that our Yeoman is furnished with bow, arrows, bracer, sword, buckler and dagger, not to speak for the moment of horn, baldric and St. Christopher, suggests at once that he has

[1] J. Swart gives him a status in the 'servant class' along with the Cook, but the phrase fits neither, since Roger kept his own shop in London. See 'The construction of Chaucer's General Prologue', *Neophilologus*, xxxviii, 1954, 132.

[2] *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts* (New Haven), 1942, pp. 8–10. This concept survives in such a phrase as 'Yeomen of the Guard'.

[3] For this widening of usage the *O.E.D.* supplies no clear example before Fortescue (1460). See also the notes of Skeat and Tyrwhitt.

[4] See Edmund Burke, *History of Archery*, 1958, p. 163; also A. H. Burne, *The Crécy War*, 1955, pp. 32–8. According to C. Oman, English yeomen were lightly armed to give them superior agility against dismounted knights, especially on boggy terrain. See revised *Art of War in the Middle Ages*, J. H. Beeler (Ithaca), 1953, p. 136.

not, like the Knight, returned freshly from a continental campaign, but that he is in the full panoply a yeoman might assume when he is being required to 'dress up' in support of peace-time display by his superior companion. Manly, who alone seems to have noted that the Yeoman's equipment was ill-suited for 'a foreign campaign', let the matter go with a suggestion that Chaucer either 'conceived of him as having ridden with the Squire to meet the Knight or thought of him in his general character rather than in the special conditions of his journey'.[1]

It is, however, quite possible to see this Yeoman both as an immediate attendant on the Squire and as fitting into 'the special conditions of his journey'. For obviously the Squire also was not 'late ycome from his viage'; he rides unarmed, a festive spring-time figure moving within the peace at home, almost an incarnation, as Rosamond Tuve has pointed out, of the conventional illustrations of May in *Horae* illuminations, complete with curled yellow hair, fashionable decorated gown, and musical instrument.[2] The emphasis is upon his gayness of habits and elegance of appearance. He is exactly conceived to require an attendant dressed, as it were, for parade.

And his father, the Knight, is conceived in deliberate contrast. Throughout his long portrait we are allowed only one concrete detail of appearance, the simple armour-stained tunic, symbol both of his authenticity as a fighting man and of his habitual avoidance of pomp or pretension. Beyond that, 'his hors were goode, but he was nat gay'; that is all. The bulk of the description concerns his knightly thoughts and deeds.

It is the opposite stress, upon chivalric externals rather than internals, which is continued from the Squire's portrait into the Yeoman's. There is the same selection of glittering *superficies*, fresh colours, pageantry. He is hung round with weapons, and they are not battle-stained but expensively decorated, 'gay'—the

[1] Ed. *Canterbury Tales*, p. 503. Pollard, p. 39, suggests they rode up 'from some country place' to join the Knight.

[2] *Seasons and months/ Studies in a tradition of middle English poetry* (Paris), 1933, pp. 186–7.

very attribute denied the Knight is twice introduced to fix the quality of this apparitor's accoutrements. Naturally, not all the Knight's yeomen would have been drawn from the manor to accompany him abroad, and Chaucer, when he 'guesses' that this one was a forester, supplies us with a practical reason for presuming that he had been left behind as one of the guardians of the game-preserve, a duty requiring attention whether or not the manor lord were home. Nevertheless the Yeoman's portrait gives us far more detail than is necessary for, or even relevant to, the depiction of a manorial under-forester,[1] and they are details which can be taken to sound a quietly humorous echo to the study of the Squire.

For the habiliments of this Yeoman are exactly those with which the Squire would furnish him when he selected him as his personal attendant and prepared to ride up in his embroidered gown to Southwark and join his father on a pilgrimage. It is not simply the over-impressive quantity and variety of arms hanging about the Yeoman which suggests this interpretation; it is the quality of his accoutrements. His dagger is not only sharp, as a huntsman's should be, it is 'gay' with a decorated mount, harneised wel'. His bracer too, that elongated leather glove sometimes worn to guard the flesh from the snap of a longbow's string, is 'gay', by which, as Muriel Bowden has remarked, Chaucer could only mean that it was studded with metal or painted bright colours,[2] a bracer less practical than impressive. (Roger Ascham, indeed, suspected that a skilful archer did not really need a bracer at all.)[3] His forester's talisman, the brooch of St. Christopher, is of nothing cheaper than shining silver, a metal

[1] So O. E. Emerson classifies him to distinguish him from more exalted royal officials (such as Chaucer himself was at one time), preservers of 'Vert and Venison'. A yeoman's forestry duties were 'nearly equivalent' to those of a modern game-keeper': 'Chaucer and medieval hunting', *Romanic Review*, xiii, 1922, 121.

[2] *A Commentary on the General Prologue* (New York), 1949, p. 87.

[3] E. Arber, ed. *Toxophilus*, 1868, p. 108.

forbidden by statute in the ornamentation of yeomen.[1] His bawdric is, by definition, 'a belt or girdle . . . usually richly ornamented',[2] and it is chosen to form a green ensemble with his coat and his hood. Even his close-cropped 'not-heed' may have been calculated to create the effect not so much of rusticity as of military spruceness.[3] One feels, of course, that the Yeoman is the type of man who himself enjoys all this colour and glittering array but the intention behind it is surely not, as Chaucer's most recent editor would have it, to illustrate 'the sense of purposeful order that we associate with the Knight he serves',[4] but rather to complete the sense of gay holiday panoply which we associate with the Squire he is at the moment serving.

A final detail, whose significance has been much disputed, may well be the most calculated to clinch the effect: the 'sheef of pecock arwes'. That there was at some time a fashion of peacock-feathering of arrows is undeniable, and has been frequently pointed out,[5] but what is far less certain, though it has come to be assumed, is that it was a fashion in actual military use. Skeat took the item as evidence of the Yeoman's fighting efficiency, quoting in proof a passage from Lydgate's 'The Hors, the Shepe, and the Gosse' to the effect that peacock feathers were as good as swan and better than goose.[6] But the monk of Bury, a dubious authority

[1] Cf. Tyrwhitt's note, iv, 196: 'I do not see the meaning of this ornament. By the Stat. 37 E.III. *Yeomen* are forbidden to wear any ornaments of *gold* or *silver*.' His dagger was also probably silver-mounted; see Skeat's note to line 114.

[2] *O.E.D.*, 'baldric'. Pollard, p. 114, noted the expensiveness of this paraphernalia but inferred only that 'the Yeoman was a man of substance and while serving the Knight as a forester he would probably hold a farm as well'; but this, as we have seen, is anachronistic comment.

[3] See Skeat's note, p. 12.

[4] Donaldson, p. 833.

[5] As in the notes to line 104 by Skeat, Pollard, Manly, Bowden, Robinson. Manly alludes to, but does not cite, mention of peacock arrows in 'contemporary accounts of purchases'.

[6] *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 15, rev. edn., 1903, lines 211–4: 'Through al the lond / of Brutis Albion, For fether'd Arwes / (as I reherse can) Goos is the best / (as in *compar*isoun,) Except fetheris / of Pekok or of Swan'. In his *Troy Book* Lydgate equips Deiphobus's archers, at one time, with 'fetheris of pecock, fresche & schene'; see edn. H. Bergen, EETS e.s. 103, 1908, II, bk. iii, line 1414.

to invoke on martial subjects, is unique in his opinion; moreover he does not say for what purpose the more exotic feathers were superior. That it was not a martial one is abundantly clear from the rest of the poem. For Lydgate's Goose asserts, without contradiction by his two animal rivals, that it is *his* feathers which 'shal vs defende / a-geyn our mortal foon'. Poictiers was won by the Goose; the Duke of Clarence lost a battle [1421] and his life for attempting all with cavalry and leaving 'my fetheris' behind. So popular are 'Fetheres of goos [that] / whan thee falle or mout, To gadre he*m* vp / heerdis hem delite, to selle hem to flatcheres / the grey w*ith* the whihte'.[1]

Similarly, a passage in the *Geste of Robin Hood*, also cited by Skeat, as later by Bowden and others, occurs in a context of panoply rather than of warfare; we are told of peacock-feathered quarrels 'ynotched all with white silver; / It was a seemly sight'. These arrows and their bows were created as a sumptuous present to Robin from a knight whose patrimony he had saved. They are no more evidence of what was prized for daily practicalities than the arrow, later described in the same poem, with silver shaft and feathers of rich red gold, which the sheriff of Nottingham set up as a prize for archery.[2] Thomas Warton, it is true, noted that peacock bolts were listed, in 1471, in the stores of the bishops' castles of Farnham and of Taunton;[3] but episcopal storerooms are where one might expect to find the tackle of pageantry, and it is singular that there are no references to the use of such arrows in any accounts of medieval fighting, though many to the 'grey-goose-winge'.[4] Edith Krappe, in an attempt to fortify Skeat's

[1] 'The Hors, the Shepe, and the Gosse', lines 180–2, 433–4, etc. The only reference to swan-feathered arrows in actual warfare would appear to be in 'Chevy Chase', st. 43—the arrow that killed Montgomerye.

[2] 'A little geste of Robin Hood', ed. A. Quiller-Couch, *Oxford Book of Ballads* (Oxford), 1910, sts. 132, 285. It is not without relevance that 'peacock' had by Chaucer's time acquired the modern figurative use to designate 'ostentatious display and vainglory'; see *O.E.D.*

[3] *History of English Poetry*, 1871, p. 375n4.

[4] e.g., 'Chevy Chase'. See also Jos. Strutt, *Glig-gamena Angel-Ðeode . . .*, 1801, pp. 47–48. Strutt found only one entry for peacock arrows (*Lib. Compotis Garderobae* sub. an. 4. Ed. ii, p. 53) and this with the significant notation that they had been made 'pro rege'.

opinion, supplied two new references: the will of a London apothecary (1361), and a passage from 'The Lady of the Fountain' in *The Mabinogion*.[1] Both her quotations, however, simply underline the fact that peacock arrows were thought of, in Chaucer's time, not as superior warshafts but as exotic items for the 'bravery of the eye'. The highly imaginative scene which Miss Krappe refers to in *The Mabinogion* is indeed worth quoting again, and more fully; it concerns two gallants very much like our Yeoman's Squire: 'two curly yellow-headed youths, with a frontlet of gold about the head of each of them, and a tunic of yellow brocaded silk upon each of them, . . . and buckles of gold on their instep . . . And a bow of ivory on the hand of each of them, and strings of deer sinews therto, and arrows with their shafts of walrus-ivory, winged with peacock feathers, and heads of gold on the shafts and gold-bladed knives . . .'[2] Chaucer's Squire could not afford to equip himself with a gold frontlet or buckles, any more than he could furnish his attendant with an ivory bow and gold-tipped shafts; but he could arrange at least for peacock feathers, splendid in themselves, though undoubtedly not what our Yeoman will shaft his arrows with when he has to bring down either a deer or a man.

Roger Ascham is still the first and soundest authority on such matters, and his testimony is quite unambiguous; it deserves to be quoted more fully than is customary by Chaucer annotators:

[1] 'A note on Chaucer's Yeoman', *M.L.N.*, xliii, 1928, 176–7.

[2] tr. G. & T. Jones, 1949, p. 156. The speaker is Cynon, who is simply attempting, at Owen's request, to spin a tale about 'the most wondrous thing thou knowest', and the passage is of no value in arriving at the realities of fourteenth-century English archery. The bows here were undoubtedly thought of as cross-bows, not long-bows, like our Yeoman's. Crossbow shafts were often feathered, in reality, with such prosaic material as leather or thin wood. The yew of the bow was sometimes, however, inter-layered if not with ivory at least with whalebone. See the notes of A. & F. Baillie-Graham to their edn. of the translation by Edward, 2nd Duke of York, of Gaston Phoebus, *The master of game*, 1904, p. 120. J. Loth, from whose French translation of *The Mabinogion* Miss Krappe has chosen to quote, himself comments on the passage she has extracted to the effect that the peacock feather was 'un *ornement* recherché' (my emphasis), and he adduces the line from the Yeoman's portrait in proof! See his rev. edn. (Paris), 1913, ii, 6.

There is no one thing, in al shoting, so moche to be loked on as the fether . . . Nowe to looke on the fedders of all maner birdes, you shal se some so lowe weke and shorte, some so course, stoore and harde, and the rib so brickle, thin and narrow, that it can nether be drawen, pared, nor yet well set on, that except it be a swan for a dead shafte . . . or a ducke for a flyghte which lastes but one shoote, there is no fether but onelye of a goose that hath all commodities in it. And trewelye at a short but, which some man doth use, ye Pecock fether doth seldome kepe vp ye shaft eyther ryght or leuel, it is so roughe and heuy, so that many men which haue taken them vp *for gayenesse*, hathe layde them down agayne for profyte.[1]

Nearly everything about this Yeoman seems to have been taken up for gayness, if not at the will of, at least in sympathy with the gayness of his immediate master, that amorous dandy the Squire. And him we automatically associate, as Charles Owen says, with 'a single physical detail that epitomises the moral posture . . ., he was embroidered—a springtide display of talents, attractive, but still on the surface'.[2] Read in this conjunction, the peculiarly 'decorative' quality which has been ascribed to the Yeoman's portrait may be seen to have functional significance after all; it is both an illuminating pendant to the Squire's and, in its own right, a study of a recognisable type, the medieval equivalent of the over-polished, over-accoutred, perhaps over-efficient and slightly impractical parade-ground guardsman. As such it contains a gentle suffusion of that quiet and sunny irony of exaggeration which runs throughout Chaucer's *Prologue*, an irony underlined by the ambiguity still lurking in the opening lines:

> A Yeman hadde he and servantz namo
> At that tyme, for hym liste ride so.

Of course, it *could* be the humble Knight who has chosen to ride with but one servant—we might forget the grammatical awkwardness—if it were not for the very un-humble effect this Yeoman creates. The Knight, moreover, has at this juncture

[1] *Toxophilus*, pp. 128–30. My emphasis.

[2] 'Morality as a comic motif in the Canterbury Tales', *College English*, xvi, 1955, 229.

plainly two servants, as Skeat said; the Squire, though his son, also stands in the technical feudal sense of servant to him, and waits on him, 'lowely, and servysable'. It is the Squire who has ridden up with but one attendant, and considering the lavish way he has decked this Yeoman out to meet the eye of his Spartan parent, the Squire has done wisely to be pleased to ride with no more apparitors than one.

Excuse

(for Marlene)

I blame it all on those headhurting books:
The dreams and journeys,
Destructions, idylls, time's ambiguous mercies,
And whatever looks
Like my revenge on what I found in books.

I blame it on the novels and the plays:
Murders and marriages,
Visions and sermons, symbols, images,
Those heady days
I ranted like the heroes of the plays.

I blame it on the poems above all:
From that contagion
Comes the paradox of my condition:
When I have blamed it all
On poems, it is the poems save me after all.

T. H. Jones

The Poetry of Sir Walter Ralegh

PETER URE

WHEN Sir Walter Ralegh paid a visit to Edmund Spenser in the autumn of 1589, a few months after Spenser had acquired his castle and estate near Cork, he was a man who had already created his own legend. He was perhaps the most brilliant figure at the brilliant court, hated and courted for his pride and power, already a sea-captain, an empire-builder, and an Irish landowner. Spenser has left us an idealised account of their poetical intercourse in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. They read each other's poems. Spenser had the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* to show, and Ralegh had a portion of a long poem which he was writing in praise of Queen Elizabeth. The two poets travelled back to England together across Ralegh's domain, the wide wilderness of waters that was the Shepherd of Ocean's element. But in little over a year Spenser was back at Kilcolman, having lost many illusions about his aptitude for court-favour; and Ralegh's career, in the many years that remained to him, was to take on an increasingly ghastly aspect until the shameful moment, twenty-eight years later, when King James cut off his head to please the Spanish Ambassador.

The episode at Spenser's Irish castle and its poetical interludes are perhaps the pleasantest glimpses we have of Ralegh, although the scarlet thread of his political ambition runs through even that. It would be easy to draw false inferences from the episode. Both men were old acquaintances, both were conscious proponents of the English Protestant Renaissance; both were engaged on ambitious poems dedicated to and in large measure about their sovereign, and both were hoping by such means to advance their fortunes in the state. Yet, if we set their poetry side by side, what

strikes us is not the likeness but the difference. Ralegh must have been as fully aware as anybody else alive in his time that he was living in the Age of Spenser. But he was not a Spenserian. It is not simply that *The Faerie Queene* demands a lifetime's study, while you can, if you wish, read through all Ralegh's poems in an afternoon—there are not more than forty in the canon, and all of them, except for the five hundred lines of *Cynthia* (his poem to the Queen, or, rather, what survives of it), are quite short. The differences go deeper than that.

Writing poems to and about the court and the Queen is often the compositional centre in the work of both men. But Spenser, although he touched the fringes of preferment and hoped to enjoy more of it, writes essentially as an outsider. Because of this, he was able to see the brilliant and perilous working of power as a whole. In *The Faerie Queene* he was able to convey a sense of the court as only a part of the nation, a sense of the existence of the nation itself. When he addresses the Queen, the tone is distant, humble and yet proud. He is the inspired Bard of England speaking to England's Sovereign, and both are servants of something greater than themselves. 'Queen of Love', 'Prince of Peace', he calls her, 'Great lady of the greatest isle':

> Dread Soverayne Goddesse, that doest highest sit
> In seate of judgement, in th'Almightie's stead,
> And with magnificke might and wondrous wit
> Doest to thy people righteous doome aread,
> That furthest Nations filles with awfull dread . . .[1]

But the court is Ralegh's own ground, and, when it proves to be a quicksand, the poems that reject it have a note of personal feeling which is not present when Spenser writes of his retirement from it. Ralegh's note can be one of savage disassociation—his own world has betrayed him and that is hard to bear—as in the obsessive rhythms and brutal anaphora of 'The Lie':

> Say to the Court it glowes
> and shines like rotten wood,

[1] *Faerie Queene*, V. Prologue, II.

Say to the Church it showes
what's good, and doth no good.
If Church and Court reply,
then give them both the lie.

Tell men of high condition,
that mannage the estate,
Their purpose is ambition,
their practise onely hate:
And if they once reply,
then give them all the lie.

This theme of the rejection of the court is a traditional one. It is used by Sidney in his 'Disprayse of the Courtly Life', and many poems on the subject will be found in *Tottel's Miscellany* and the other anthologies that preceded the work of the major Elizabethan poets. But in 'The Lie' it has a personal force that is a long way from a merely theoretical contempt of the world epitomized by the court. And what is savagery in this poem can be transformed in Ralegh's other poems into a throbbing clamour of personal regret and sadness of spirit, as though Ralegh could not see further than his own disappointments. We know from his prose-writings that in actuality he could see much further. As a man, he had as keen a sense of the nation and of the world beyond it as Spenser; but he keeps all that out of his poems. Therefore his great poem of disappointment, the five hundred lines of *Cynthia*, Ralegh's counterpart to *The Faerie Queene*, is a very private poem. When Ralegh addressed his sovereign, the convention which he adopted is quite different from the one employed by Spenser. Spenser plays the role of the vassal-bard, Ralegh that of the rejected lover. The analogy between the courtier out of favour and the dismissed lover is pressed home until it becomes a sharp lament over a waste land and a wasted life:

From fruitfull trees I gather withred leaves
And glean the broken eares with misers hands,
Who sometyme did injoy the waighty sheaves
I seeke faire floures amidd the brinish sand.

The praise of Elizabeth with which the poem is charged has this personal note too. Of the two ways in which Elizabethan poets

were most accustomed to celebrate the Queen, as a sovereign divinity or as a virtuous mistress, Ralegh naturally chose the latter. It is what we would expect of an insider. Spenser himself made the point in the induction to the third book of *The Faerie Queene*. There he tells the Queen that, with his humble quill, he is only writing at a distance from her living colours; if she wishes to see herself rightly pictured in her true beauty, let her turn to Ralegh.

Ralegh's own compliment to Spenser is also interesting. It occurs in the form of a sonnet printed in 1590 in commendation of the first three Books of *The Faerie Queene*. But it is interesting not so much because it conveys Ralegh's opinion of that great work as because of its own magnificence. It is one of the best of Ralegh's poems, and one of the greatest of Elizabethan sonnets:

> Methought I saw the grave, where *Laura* lay,
> Within that Temple, where the vestall flame
> Was wont to burne, and passing by that way,
> To see that buried dust of living fame,
> Whose tombe faire love, and fairer vertue kept,
> All suddeinly I saw the Faery Queene:
> At whose approch the soule of *Petrarke* wept,
> And from thenceforth those graces were not seene.
> For they this Queene attended, in whose steed
> Oblivion laid him downe on *Lauras* herse:
> Hereat the hardest stones were seene to bleed,
> And grones of buried ghostes the hevens did perse.
> Where *Homers* spright did tremble all for griefe,
> And curst th' accesse of that celestiall theife.

In some ways, this sonnet might be by a contemporary of Wyatt and Surrey; in others, it belongs very much to the era of Sidney and Shakespeare. Ralegh has taken the ancient *topos* of the great new poet out-distancing and outshining the classical giants. For its time, his diction is a little old-fashioned—the *groaning ghosts* and *bleeding stones* take us back to *Tottel's Miscellany*. But, on the other hand, the ordering of the sentences, the wonderful planning of the sonnet as a whole (a feature on which Sir Edmund

Chambers remarked) are signs of the new flowering of poetry in the 1580's and 1590's. Yet, magnificent though the sonnet is, it is also puzzling. It celebrates the appearance of a great new work of art, yet it has a tragic rather than a joyous air. Jonson, who used the same *topos* when he praised Shakespeare in the First Folio, was able to impart an air of jollity, of bell-ringing, fireworks, and water-music to the occasion. That is much nearer the note we expect when a theme of this kind is handled. Ralegh's welcome to Spenser is, by contrast, very dark. He seems more moved to pity by the fate of the displaced poets than pleased because a new one has outclassed them. His sonnet is constructed so that all the force of feeling gathers into the sestet, on Petrarch's weeping soul, and on 'Oblivion laid him down on *Lauras* herse': a magnificent conceit, but too grim and ghastly for the occasion, as though Michelangelo's 'Night' had suddenly been glimpsed at the heart of the revel. And by the two concluding lines we are irresistibly reminded of that grand thief Satan climbing up into God's fold in the third Book of *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, it has long seemed likely that Milton did borrow from this sonnet when he wrote his own sonnet 'Methought I saw my late espoused saint'; but Milton's sonnet is concerned with his vision of his dead wife, and the tragic tone is fitting.

There is, therefore, a faint air of miscalculation about Ralegh's poem, of emotion in excess of its object, of a man being more serious than he really intends to be. It is probably foolish to suggest that there was something in the commonplace of the displaced poet that went too near to Ralegh's heart. For displaced poet did he too easily read displaced courtier? However this may be, it is true that the tragic note, the note of fear and betrayal, which seems to make such an indecorous intrusion on this gay occasion, is recurrent in Ralegh's extant verse. We can observe this tone—one might almost call it an obsession—at work in such a poem as 'Nature that washt her hands in milke'. In this poem it has the effect of producing a new, sombre, and fearful poem out of the old shell of what was originally a gay and pretty one. The poetic toy suddenly turns into a weeping funeral verse, and we see the

skull beneath the skin. Ralegh describes in the first stanzas how nature took snow and silk at love's behest and made from them a fair but heartless girl. With that pretty fancy, such as it is, the poem might well have seemed complete. But then Time comes on the scene:

> But Time which nature doth despise,
> And rudely gives her love the lye,
> Makes hope a foole, and sorrow wise,
> His hands doth neither wash, nor dry,
> But being made of steele and rust,
> Turnes snow, and silke, and milke to dust.
>
> The Light, the Belly, lipps and breath,
> He dimms, discolours, and destroyes,
> With those he feedes, but fills not death,
> Which sometimes were the foode of Joyes;
> Yea Time doth dull each lively witt,
> And dryes all wantonnes with it.
>
> Oh cruell Time which takes in trust
> Our youth, our Joyes and all we have,
> And payes us but with age and dust,
> Who in the darke and silent grave
> When we have wandred all our wayes
> Shutts up the story of our dayes.

There is no question here of emotion in excess of the object, or inappropriate to it, and we have come a long way from Spenser. Spenser was often plangent about the ruins of Time, but he had none of this shrinking horror, and for him, in the end, Time itself was only an aspect of revolving change.

It is tempting, indeed, to take these stanzas as an index of Ralegh's modernity as compared with Spenser's antiquity. Was Spenser unable to sound this note because of his share in the large-eyed innocence of an earlier, golden world; because he was a man who died before the Elizabethan adventure ran aground in the shallows of Jacobean disappointment and anti-climax? In these three stanzas, it might be argued, there is reflected the true voice of Jacobean feeling, of Hamlet by the graveside, of Vindice and

the poisoned skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, all that melancholy and malcontentism which is supposed to have invaded literature at the turn of the century. 'Nature that washt her hands in milke' could be used as a handy symbol of the transition from Elizabethan to Jacobean, the delicate art of its first portion and the disgusted disrelish of the second straddling the two worlds of *The Faerie Queene* and *Hamlet*. Other evidence for Ralegh's transitional status could be brought into court in the form of his most celebrated poem, the 'Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd' (if it is indeed by Ralegh—we have only Izaak Walton's word for it). Christopher Marlowe's song, to which Ralegh's poem is an answer, 'Come live with me and be my love', is the perfection of pastoral innocence, of uncorrupted and uncourtly pleasure. The reply said to have been devised by Ralegh is another of his savage reminders of mutability, an utter refusal to dream:

> Thy gownes, thy shoes, thy beds of Roses,
> Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
> Soone breake, soone wither, soone forgotten:
> In follie ripe, in reason rotten.

Here, perhaps, Jacobean disillusion deliberately flouts the Elizabethan hope.

Yet the argument would be a very weak one. What we are listening to, in the last three stanzas of 'Nature that washt her hands in milke' or in the 'Nymph's Reply', is not Jacobean disaccord. It is an altogether older note: an echo of the sententious mournfulness of the 1570's. The anthologies of that period, which are the chief repositories of such verse as has survived from the earlier years of Elizabeth Tudor, are full of poems which contemplate the ghastliness of the grave, the swiftness of time's passage, or the vanity of youthful love. 'My youthfull partes be played', they never tire of saying, 'And I must learne to die':[1]

> To earth the stout, the prowd, the ritch shall yeeld,
> The weake, the meeke, the poore, shall shrowded lye

[1] H. E. Rollins ed. *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), (Cambridge, Mass.), 1926, p. 44.

In dampish mould, the stout with Speare and Sheeld
Cannot defend himselfe when hee shall dye.[1]

Or:

Hope for no immortalitie, for welth will weare away,
As we may learne by every yeare, yea howres of every day . . .
The rage of stormes done make all colde which somer had made so warm
Wherefore let no man put his trust in that that will decay,
For slipper welth will not continue, pleasure will weare away.
For when that we have lost our lyfe, & lye under a stone,
What are we then, we are but earth, then is our pleasure gon.[2]

Spenser, too, can write like this, but it is not what we chiefly remember about him. He moved away from gazing at the ruins of Time, finding the Heavenly Jerusalem more interesting. Another glance at the contrast between Ralegh and Spenser will strengthen the argument that Ralegh is more affected by post-medieval melancholy than by Jacobean disillusion. It is a true generalisation about Spenser to say that he is one of the great pioneers of the rich, splendid, and decorated style, despite his many qualities of sageness and sobriety. Ralegh, although he, too, has touches of gold, mainly practises the plainer style, the sententiousness and lack of adornment characteristic of Spenser's predecessors. The contrasting ways in which each poet mourned in verse the death of their mutual friend, the great Sir Philip Sidney, illustrate this. Spenser adopts the creamy elegance of the pastoral guise; Sidney becomes Astrophel the shepherd boy:

For he could pipe and daunce and caroll sweet,
Emongst the shepheards in their shearing feast:
As Somers larke that with her song doth greet
The dawning day forth comming from the East.
And layes of love he also could compose,
Thrise happie she, whom he to praise did chose.[3]

Untimely slain while hunting the boar, like Adonis, Astrophel too is transformed into a flower. Spenser marries Ovidian legend with

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[2] H. E. Rollins, ed. *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557–8), (Cambridge, Mass.), 1928, I, 153

[3] *Astrophel*, ll. 31–6.

Christian fancy, for in another part of the poem the dead soldier's soul lies in paradise on beds of lilies, roses, and violets, 'like a new-borne babe'. This is Spenser's way.

Ralegh's is very different. Critics have noticed how each stanza of his sixty-line poem on the death of Sidney reads like something carved on stone. The lines are plain, stern, lapidary. They use their big, uncompromising words without concealment or reservation, words such as *virtue* or *honour*, names such as *England* or *Flanders*; it is not Astrophel who is being laid to rest but 'the right Honorable Sir Philip Sidney, Knight, Lord Governor of Flushing':

> Backe to the campe, by thee that day was brought,
> First thine owne death, and after thy long fame;
> Teares to the soldiers, the proud Castilians shame;
> Vertue exprest, and honor truly taught.
>
> What hath he lost, that such great grace hath woon,
> Yong yeeres, for endles yeeres, and hope unsure
> Of fortunes gifts, for wealth that still shall dure,
> Oh happie race with so great praises run.
>
> England doth hold thy lims that bred the same,
> Flaunders thy valure where it last was tried,
> The Campe thy sorrow where thy bodie died,
> Thy friends, thy want; the world, thy vertues fame.

This note of marble gravity is common enough in Ralegh's extant poetry for it to be safely regarded as characteristic of him. We meet it again, for example, in 'The Advice', a strange poem, ostensibly a warning to a virgin to beware of those who would betray her. But it resembles the sonnet to Spenser in its excess of strength and tragic sound. It is almost as though half the poet's mind was on power, not love; on the betrayed statesman as much as on the betrayed girl. This ambiguity is characteristic of Ralegh, and ambiguities of one kind or another must torment every judgement of Ralegh's poetry as of his personality.

The ambiguities, indeed, deserve the final emphasis. Ralegh's greatest poem is 'The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage supposed to

be written by one at the point of death'. It is his greatest poem, but his least characteristic. So uncharacteristic is it that his authorship of it has often been questioned, although it has as good authority for being admitted to the canon as many others. Much of what has been said here about Ralegh is denied by this poem. 'The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage' is a vision of death and judgement, but it is not one of a stern or mournful kind. The heaven that the poet imagines is a florid and baroque place of nectar fountains and milky hills, diamond ceilings and bowers of pearl. As well as its wealth of golden imagery, it is charged with a combination of humble joy and metaphysical wit which is found nowhere else in Ralegh. Its vision of the judgement of the soul marvellously combines the continued witty image with the heartfelt prayer. It speaks of

> heavens bribeless hall
> Where no corrupted voices brall,
> No Conscience molten into gold,
> Nor forg'd accusers bought and sold,
> No cause deferd, nor vaine spent Journey,
> For there Christ is the Kings Atturney:
> Who pleades for all without degrees,
> And he hath Angells, but no fees.
>
> When the grand twelve million Jury
> Of our sinnes and sinfull fury,
> Gainst our soules blacke verdicts give,
> Christ pleads his death, and then we live,
> Be thou my speaker taintless pleader,
> Unblotted Lawer, true proceeder,
> Thou movest salvation even for almes:
> Not with a bribed Lawyers palmes.

If this is Ralegh, it is a Ralegh whom Spenser never knew. And by a strange irony, it is a Spenserian Ralegh, which turns upside down the usual contrast between the two poets. In this poem Ralegh draws close to Spenser in his vision of heaven (which resembles the Red Cross Knight's vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the first Book of *The Faerie Queene*) and in the *allegoria*

of the soul-as-pilgrim, which is emblematised in the Spenserian manner.

To consider Ralegh's poetry, therefore, is to conclude upon an enigma. He was thoroughly enigmatic to his contemporaries, and since his death he has had a dozen incompatible reputations. The Shepherd of Ocean who piped so pleasantly to Spenser in his dark little Irish tower was to Sir Edward Coke a damnable atheist, a traitor with a Spanish heart.

> Ralegh doth time bestride,
> He sits 'twixt wind and tide,
> Yet up hill he cannot ride
> For all his bloody pride.
> He seeks taxes in the tin,
> He polls the poor to the skin,
> Yet he swears 'tis no sin.
> Lord, for thy pity! [1]

The mischievous Machiavel of the anonymous rhymester[2] was the same man as the liberal historian and champion of liberty devoutly admired by the seventeenth-century parliamentarians. The grotesque lover whom Shakespeare may have caricatured him as in the person of Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* is the paragon of Elizabethan gallantry who used to figure in the school history-books. But one reputation is increasingly firm: he ranks ever better amongst the minor poets of his time and was lucky in his muse, if in nothing else.

NOTE

Punctuation and spelling have been slightly modernised in some of the quotations. The standard edition of Ralegh's *Poems* is edited by A. M. C. Latham (London), 1951. There is an introductory study by Philip Edwards (London), 1954 and a study of his thought by E. Strathmann (New York), 1951. The standard biography of Ralegh is by William Stebbing (Oxford), 1899.

[1] Quoted E. Thompson, *Sir Walter Ralegh*, 1955, p. 151.

[2] *Poetical Miscellanies*, ed. Halliwell (Percy Society, 1845), pp. 13–14.

William Collins's 'Ode on the Death of Thomson'

E. M. W. TILLYARD

In yonder Grave a DRUID lies
  Where slowly winds the stealing Wave!
The Year's best Sweets shall duteous rise
  To deck it's POET's sylvan Grave!

In yon deep Bed of whisp'ring Reeds
  His airy Harp shall now be laid,
That He, whose Heart in Sorrow bleeds,
  May love thro' Life the soothing Shade.

Then Maids and Youths shall linger here,
  And while it's Sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in Pity's Ear
  To hear the WOODLAND PILGRIM's Knell.

REMEMBRANCE oft shall haunt the Shore
  When THAMES in Summer-wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing Oar
  To bid his gentle Spirit rest!

And oft as EASE and HEALTH retire
  To breezy Lawn, or Forest deep,
The Friend shall view yon whit'ning Spire,
  And 'mid the varied Landschape weep.

But Thou, who own'st that Earthy Bed,
  Ah! what will ev'ry Dirge avail?
Or Tears, which LOVE and PITY shed,
  That mourn beneath the gliding Sail!

Yet lives there one, whose heedless Eye
  Shall scorn thy pale Shrine glimm'ring near?
With Him, Sweet Bard, may FANCY die,
  And JOY desert the blooming Year.

But thou, lorn STREAM, whose sullen Tide
No sedge-crown'd SISTERS now attend,
Now waft me from the green Hill's Side
Whose cold Turf hides the buried FRIEND!

And see, the Fairy Valleys fade,
Dun Night has veil'd the solemn View!
—Yet once again, Dear parted SHADE,
Meek NATURE'S CHILD, again adieu!

The genial Meads assign'd to bless
Thy Life, shall mourn thy early Doom;
Their Hinds, and Shepherd-Girls shall dress
With simple Hands thy rural Tomb.

Long, long, thy Stone and pointed Clay
Shall melt the musing BRITON'S Eyes,
O! VALES, and WILD WOODS, shall HE say
In yonder Grave YOUR DRUID lies!

The explicators have largely spared the poetry of the eighteenth century; and the reason is not far to seek. The poetry they favour is either difficult to construe or rich in multiple meanings. Some of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* have exactly the right, the most attractive, amount of difficulty; some of Hopkins's lyrics (to judge by a recent correspondence in the *Times Literary Supplement* on the word *buckle* in the *Windhover*) yield the most abundant semantic ramifications. The poetry of the eighteenth century is different; its superficial sense hits us at once; and it aims at clarity, not suggestiveness. It thus eludes the concern dearest to the hearts of the explicators. All the same, we today cannot easily perceive and enjoy that clarity which was its first aim.

One reason is that we hold different opinions about the general and the particular in poetry. Blake said that to generalise was the sign of an idiot; and his doctrine prevailed with the Romantics, even surviving the reaction against Romanticism in recent years. Johnson, we still hold, was wrong when he advanced the doctrine of the general, of not numbering the streaks of the tulip; and Shakespeare was right in conveying the atmospheric stillness at the opening of *Hamlet* by the detail 'Not a mouse stirring'. Further,

we hold, the eighteenth century went astray because of its belief in decorum. For instance it ruled that you must not use the technical terms of any craft in polite writing because you thereby consorted with a base section of society and puzzled the mass of educated readers who, quite rightly, were not acquainted with the special craft.

Later ages may have done well to follow Blake; but in doing so they oversimplified the issue, ignoring what the current generalities meant to the eighteenth-century reader. To him these were not *merely* decorous or politely remote from real things; they were natural and they were alive. And a prime task of anyone who seeks to explicate eighteenth-century poetry is to restore to the general statements, the polite epithets, and the personifications the life which in the best literature they once possessed. It is a task as irrelevant to Donne or Hopkins as it is relevant to this poem of Collins. In discussing it I shall have first to show how much detail he conceals in his general elegiac statements and how forceful some of it is.

Collins wrote for educated readers, and he assumed that they had read Thomson's best poems, the *Seasons* and the *Castle of Indolence*. He also tells us in a footnote that the 'whit'ning spire' is that of Richmond church, which borders on the Thames. And we too should know so much before entering the poem. Not that this knowledge prevents queer things happening the moment we do enter it.

The modern reader is not averse to the first stanza's dramatic pointing to the newly dug grave; but the use of the word *Druid* for *poet* does not help him to create a dramatic picture. On the contrary the word looks like a piece of chill pseudo-politeness, an unfortunate attempt to exalt the subject of the elegy by a dragged-in piece of antiquarianism. But this appearance is deceptive. The eighteenth-century reader *expected* politeness not to say pomp, while the word *Druid* had certain associations for him. The Druid was essentially a bard: Milton in *Lycidas* had written of 'the steep, Where your old *Bards*, the famous *Druids*, lie', and, six years after Collins's ode, Gray had begun the *Bard*, founded on the legend

that Edward I had put the bards or Druids of Wales to death. By calling Thomson a Druid Collins placed him among the classic poets of the land and hinted, through the traditional connection of the Druids with the oak-tree, at Thomson's eminence as the poet of nature; a hint taken up in the second half of the verse where 'the year's best sweets', that is the loveliest flowers or foliage of the four seasons, are pictured as offering themselves to adorn his grave. Again, to a modern reader 'the year's best sweets' is at first reading as chilly as the Druid; but Collins meant it to be a signal for the imagination to go further and to picture the various seasonal offerings. The first verse is neither tame nor conventional. On the contrary it is violent in the way it aggregates the flowers and proclaims their spontaneous self-sacrifice to the man who celebrated them so well in his poem called *The Seasons*.

From the *Seasons* Collins goes on in the next verse to the *Castle of Indolence*, brought in through his allusion to the Aeolian harp, the subject of one of that poem's most famous stanzas. In the fabled Castle of Indolence the characteristic music was passive, that of the Aeolian harp, which, sounding when blown on, gave out different music according to the volume and quality of the wind.

> A certain music, never known before,
> Here lulled the pensive, melancholy mind;
> Full easily obtain'd. Behoves no more,
> But sidelong, to the gently-waving wind,
> To lay the well-tuned instrument reclined;
> From which, with airy flying fingers light,
> Beyond each mortal touch the most refined,
> The God of Winds drew sounds of deep delight:
> Whence, with just cause, the Harp of Aeolus it hight.

It is to this stanza that Collins refers in his second verse where the even lapse of the words tempts us again to slur over the concreteness of the setting and the precision of thought. We should picture the actual reeds bordering the tomb and the river and deduce the plain meaning that the lovely music of the *Castle of Indolence* will be the perpetual delight of sensitive people.

The third verse turns from specific literary reference to more general sorrow. The harp, sounding with the wind from the reeds, will awaken in the tender hearts of the young a feeling of sorrow for Thomson's death.

The next two verses are still more particularised, but in the true eighteenth-century way of polite personification. They mean that in summer time many people who like to remember Thomson will pass the place by river and cause the rowers to row slowly or 'easy', in reverence of his gentle ghost; other admirers, who prefer a land excursion for health and relaxation, will see the spire of Richmond church and lament him. He will, in fact, be a kind of classical hero, attracting votaries to his tomb. When Collins said 'Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore', he was using a polite personification, but he was also being definite, meaning by *Remembrance* 'reminiscent people', just as Goldsmith in the line 'For talking Age and whispering lovers made', meant by *talking Age* 'garrulous old folk'. Similarly by 'Ease and Health' Collins means healthy people taking a holiday. If we fail to translate these personified qualities into imagined men and women and to fuse them in the picture we also fail in the sympathy necessary for understanding the poem.

The remaining verses are less formal. Collins, growing more impassioned in the sixth and seventh verses, laments that the tears of his admirers do the dead poet no good and curses any wretch who slights him. There follow two verses describing the river, now deserted as night falls. Nature asserts itself in fact; and the 'hinds and shepherd-girls' who in the next stanza 'dress' Thomson's 'rural tomb' are true country-folk and not sophisticated visitors from neighbouring London. Those who live nearest to nature are the fittest to commemorate nature's poet. Yet Thomson was a national figure, and in the last verse it is the 'musing Briton', the educated inhabitants of the British Isles, who corporately should honour him; and in the last line Collins calls him a 'Druid' once more. (What, incidentally, does 'pointed clay' mean in the first line of the last stanza, 'Long, long, thy stone, and pointed clay'? I think it is a latinism and means the indication of

he body's resting-place, *point* being sometimes used in Collins's day for *point out* or *indicate*.)

So far, discussed in this way, the poem does not amount to more than a conventional elegy composed of inherited elements: praise of the dead poet's works, the visit of survivors to the tomb, lamentation for his death, and the hope of fame; all made agreeable by the liquid lapse of the verse. And yet I get the impression of there being more in the poem than this; and Professor H. W. Garrod, Collins's sympathetic and understanding critic, confirmed it when he wrote, 'I am left with a perplexed sense that this is a better poem than I seem to have allowed . . . It is hard to define its obscure excellence.' Such an impression applies to people as well as to poems. There is some hidden element in a person, which baffles you. Then perhaps you learn that he is an orphan, or an Irishman, or had a French mother, or was brought up in South America; and the extrinsic piece of information helps you to make a right beginning, and you have an unexpected entry into an interesting character. I welcome any extrinsic help in understanding poetry provided that in a final reading it escapes conscious notice. Now John Langhorne, a minor poet who edited Collins's verse in 1765, informs us that Collins's ode was 'written in an excursion to Richmond by water'. Given the hint we should perceive that we have to do with verses patterned on an actual river-excursion, that they compose a piece of water-music. The liquid lapse of the lines is that of the boat's glide through the water, and here is what can almost be called a plot in the way they hint at the boat's progress. One kind of progress has already been implied; that of gathering twilight. The tower of Richmond church is 'whit'ning'; it catches the last rays of the sun; and later the 'fairy alleys fade' and 'Dim Night has veiled the solemn view'. There is thus a double progression: that of nightfall and that of the boat on the river.

Let me now fill in the picture. The boat has an easy course, for it moves with the current, the stream in verse eight 'wafting' the poet from 'the green hill's side'. And the motion is continuous; the crew does not land. The 'plot' of the ode is that of the poet

and his fellows in the boat sighting the grave in the evening light, being carried past it, and losing sight of it again as night falls. In the first line, 'In yonder grave a Druid lies', *yonder* points forward. In the last line, 'In yonder grave your Druid lies', *yonder* looks back. And there are hints throughout of the boat's distance from Thomson's grave. In verse three the harp's sound swells *at distance*. The next verse, which talks of 'suspending the dashing oar', suggests that the boat is now nearer and goes slower to prolong the culminating moment. In the sixth verse the boat has arrived opposite the grave: in 'that earthly bed' *that* has replaced the previous *yon's*, and the sentiment is, as explained, more passionate, concerned with the poet rather than with those who mourn him. In the seventh verse the tomb is 'glimmering near'. In the eighth the poet bids the stream carry the boat away from the tomb. But beyond these informative hints Collins recreates with rare art the feelings one has in seeing an object grow near and then again grow distant. As one approaches, the interest thickens, one wishes to crowd in all possible items of sensation; as one looks back and sees the object dwindle, one despairs of such a thickening and relaxes in sympathy with the losing game. There are eleven verses in the poem. The first five concern the approaching boat and they are more crowded with information and with formality. (The first two verses incidentally are packed with sibilants and incurred thereby the censure of Lord Tennyson.) The middle verse is the culmination. The last five verses are more purely elegiac or descriptive, expressing a simpler sadness and a mood of relaxation. The ode's development thus agrees exquisitely with the experience of approaching and leaving an attractive object.

The last line of all, nearly repeating the first, is brilliant, packed with meaning after the fashion of only the greatest poetry. The first line of the poem, 'In *yonder* grave a Druid lies', should be read with the stress on *yonder*, denoting expectancy. The last line, 'In yonder *grave* your Druid lies', should be read with the stress on *grave*. The boat has passed; night has fallen; *yonder* is no longer emphatic; and the gathering dark has brought closer the thought of the grave. And through substituting *your Druid* for *a Druid* of

ine one (*your* referring to the vales and woods) Collins transfers Thomson from his own fostering care, shown earlier in the poem, to those natural things whose poet Thomson was and which belong to the earth in which he is buried. And to this transference the falling music of the last verse is perfectly appropriate.

My last observation is rasher and more conjectural. The richest lyrics usually reveal some contrast or paradox, doing justice to both constituent elements. In this ode of Collins there may be a contrast, larger than the context of the poem, between the human solicitude for Thomson and his memory, shown while the boat approaches, and the natural things, night and the earth, which are felt to envelop him while the boat recedes. It is the opposition between the human, the known, the particular and the natural, the unknown, the illimitable. In fact the poem may resolve itself into one of those large commonplaces that lie at the heart of most good poetry.

It was the habit, in the years when the Romantic poets were thought the norm of the centrally poetical, to talk of Gray and Collins as writers not belonging to that age, to picture them as eccentric individuals who did not fit in with its poetic conventions and its social exigencies. In fact, they were turned into precursors of the great flowering that was about to break forth. Of the two, Collins was the more eccentric and individual, though not necessarily the better poet. And of his poems the *Ode to Evening* was the remotest from the eighteenth century, supremely daring as an unrhymed lyric in the age of the couplet, and Wordsworthian in its steady contemplation of the natural scene:

> Or if chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
> Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut,
> That from the mountain's side
> Views wilds and swelling floods,
>
> And hamlets brown and dim-discover'd spires,
> And hears their simple bell and marks o'er all
> Thy dewy fingers draw
> The gradual dusky veil.

It could only have been mistaken kindness that detached such lines from their age: the kindness of refusing to allow anything so sensitively pictorial to belong to an age of prose. And how mistaken! For the retired, the contemplative man, in this context the man who seeks his lonely hut, was part of the very mythology of the Augustan age, while the brown landscape is all of a piece with Thomson's *Seasons* and the nature painters in water-colours. The metre appeared alien to its age for a longer time: in fact till Professor Garrod pointed out its unimpeachable decorum: unimpeachable because derived from Milton's translation of Horace's *Ode to Pyrrha*:

> What slender youth bedew'd with liquid odours
> Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,
> Pyrrha, for whom bind'st thou
> In wreaths thy golden hair?

Collins is indeed a man of his age; and not least in his relation to his audience. Johnson found 'his appearance decent and manly; his knowledge considerable, his views extensive, his conversation elegant, and his disposition cheerful'. And if later Collins was afflicted with a melancholy that for a time confined him to an asylum, Johnson never dreams of attributing the least particle of the cause to a feeling of hostility to his surroundings. Johnson says that he 'employed his mind chiefly upon works of fiction and subjects of fancy, and, by indulging some peculiar habits of thought, was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature'. But Johnson had no objection to some poetry behaving in this way, and he balances this description of Collins's mental proclivities by asserting that he 'was a man of extensive literature and of vigorous faculties'.

Collins, in fact, fully shares the obligation felt by his age to consider the tastes and the requirements of the reading public.

Whatever the virtues, or the limitations, of Collins's *Ode Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thomson*, it is at ease with its audience, making its surprises or uniquenesses grow out of the poetical habits with which his equals were familiar, and well content to be read and enjoyed should its public consider it to be worth perusal and enjoyment.

Wordsworth and the Weather

HELEN DARBISHIRE

In one of those forthright paradoxes which to him were simple commonplaces Wordsworth has said: 'The Child is father of the Man'. Certain it is that to understand any vital characteristic of his mind or art the best approach is through what he has told us of his childhood. Every true lover of his poetry must be conscious of the Weather as a significant element in it. Go back with him to his early childhood and you begin to understand the part it plays.

His early days in Cockermouth on the banks of the Derwent gave him such joys as he never forgot. 'Oh!—many a time', he says, addressing the river

> Oh! many a time have I, a five-years child
> A naked boy, among thy silent pools
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day—

He remembers how he 'bask'd in the sun, and plung'd and bask'd again' and how he 'stood alone'

> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
> On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness *to sport*
> *A naked savage in the thunder-shower*!
>
> *The Prelude I*

Already the weather has played a lively part in an unforgettable experience, which, significantly, he calls up to spur him on to follow his vocation as Poet.

Englishmen are bound to be alive to the weather. North-countrymen, of the mountain districts, are tolerant of what is

elsewhere called 'bad' weather. Wordsworth was more than tolerant: he enjoyed to the last drop of his blood, to the last day of his life, *all* kinds of weather. Stormy weather in the mountains is not everybody's choice: what Wordsworth felt about it as a youth he tells in an exultant passage in *The Excursion*:

> Oh what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
> To have a body . . .
> And to the elements surrender it
> As if it were a spirit!—How divine
> The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man
> To roam at large among unpeopled glens
> And mountainous retirements, only trod
> By devious footsteps; regions consecrate
> To oldest time! and, reckless of the storm
> That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
> Be as a presence or a motion—one
> Among the many there; and while the mists
> Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
> And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
> As fast as a musician scatters sounds
> Out of an instrument; and while the streams . . .
> Descending from the region of the clouds,
> And starting from the hollows of the earth
> More multitudinous every moment, rend
> Their way before them—what a joy to roam
> An equal among mightiest energies;
> And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
> Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
> By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
> 'Rage on, ye elements! let moon and stars
> Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
> With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
> From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!'[1]
>
> *Excursion, IV 509–39*

In old age Wordsworth could still enjoy a day of 'bad' weather of another kind. On a mild December day in 1843 (Wordsworth was seventy-three) a day of unceasing, soaking rain, Edward Quillinan, unfortunate Southerner, writes to Crabb Robinson: 'I have been walking about most of the morning through the

waters and mists with the Bard, who seems to defy all weathers and who called this "a beautiful soft solemn day"'.

His very first winter in Grasmere—they settled into Dove Cottage on 20 December 1799—was a good baptism. He writes in March:

> It loves us now, this Vale so beautiful
> Begins to love us! By a sullen storm
> *Two months unwearied of severest storm*
> It put the temper of our minds to proof,
> And found us faithful through the gloom, and heard
> The Poet mutter his prelusive songs
> With cheerful heart, an unknown voice of joy,
> Among the silence of the woods and hills—

How sensitive he and his sister were to the weather from day to day, from hour to hour, is beautifully illustrated in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals. And the importance to the poet of this element in his experience is thrown into a high light in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1802:

> The Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings—But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; *with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat,* with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow.

The predominance he gives here to 'the operations of the elements' over human events and emotions is at first blush surprising: they stand first and they bulk more largely. But go back once more to the experience of his childhood and you see why. He tells us with convincing detail in the most haunting books of *The Prelude* how it was Nature that first opened his mind to the significance of life itself; the revelation through human beings followed later. The 'operations of the elements'—the formal phrase inspires confidence—were bound to play a vital part in his poetry.

First we may note a few poems or passages in which the weather is the main subject. There is the 'Ode Composed on an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty' of which the theme is the unusual effect of radiant light from the low level rays of the setting sun upon a mountain landscape, on a particularly clear evening:

> No sound is uttered, but a deep
> And solemn harmony pervades
> The hollow vale from steep to steep,
> And penetrates the glades.
> Far distant images draw nigh
> Called forth by wondrous potency
> Of beamy radiance, that imbues
> Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues.

He sees 'gilded flocks', not a piece of poetic licence but the record of a real effect of horizontal, sunset light on the fleeces of sheep, forming a kind of golden halo. (I saw it one evening from the train, approaching Windermere.) In *The Excursion* he describes another remarkable sunset scene, one which he and Sir George Beaumont witnessed together, coming over the Kirkstone Pass—'a brilliant sunset *after a storm*', Sir George notes. Wordsworth introduces it into the episode, described by the Solitary, of the bringing home of the old Peasant lost on the mountains—

> The shepherds moved
> Through the dull mist, I following—when a step
> A single step, that freed me from the skirts
> Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
> Glory beyond all glory ever seen
> By waking sense, or by the dreaming soul!
> The appearance, instantly disclosed,
> Was of a mighty city—boldly say
> A wilderness of building, sinking far
> And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth
> Far sinking into splendour—without end!—
> By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
> Upon the dark materials of the storm
> Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
> And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
> The vapours had receded, taking there
> Their station under a cerulean sky.

An elaborate passage full of splendid imagery follows: it stands alone in Wordsworth's poetry as a set-piece of description, for, alive as he was to landscape, he was not a descriptive poet.

An effect of a directly opposite kind wrought by the weather is recorded in his poem on Black Comb. Here he tells how 'a Geographic labourer', who camped on the summit to measure heights and distances, had the extraordinary experience of sudden black darkness descending in daytime upon the mountain, 'As if the golden day itself had been Extinguished in a moment'.

But unusual or melodramatic effects are not characteristic of his poetry. A *usual* phase of the weather has deeper meaning for him.

In his poetic narratives the weather, as we should expect, plays an active part. His highly imaginative poem 'Resolution and Independence' known familiarly as 'The Leechgatherer', has an opening stanza which is concerned closely with the weather:

> There was a roaring in the wind all night;
> The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
> But now the sun is shining calm and bright;
> The birds are singing in the distant woods;
> Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
> The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
> And all the air is full of pleasant noise of waters.

Was ever the reality of a radiant Spring morning after a stormy night conveyed so truly in the minimum of words—every touch telling, every note right? But the prime importance poetically of the stanza lies in its subtle relation with the poet's successive moods, and with the moving incident which is the poem's centre.

His great Lyrical Ballad *The Thorn* owes its subject to the weather. He tells us himself that this poem:

> 'arose out of my observing on the ridge of Quantock Hill *on a stormy day*, a thorn which I had often past in calm and bright weather without noticing it. I said to myself, Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this thorn permanently as impressive an object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?'

The old sea-captain who tells the tale introduces his heroine in a storm on the mountain. And in the stanza which is the heart of

the ballad the weather is with the lonely woman, seeming to watch over her:

> At all times of the day and night
> This wretched Woman thither goes;
> And she is known to every star,
> And every wind that blows;
> And there, beside the Thorn, she sits
> When the blue daylight's in the skies,
> And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
> Or frosty air is keen and still—

The long easy-going narrative, 'The Waggoner' opens characteristically. Wordsworth told Mr. Justice Coleridge that his object in it had not been understood. 'It was the play of the fancy on a domestic incident and a lowly character: he wished by the opening descriptive lines to put his reader into the state of mind in which he wished it to be read.' As with 'The Leechgatherer', it is the weather that provides the setting. The opening lines give a delicately precise description of a still, stifling June evening in the Rydal valley:

> 'Tis spent—this burning day of June,
> Soft darkness o'er its latest gleams is stealing;
> The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune[1]
> Twirling his watchman's rattle about,
> On restless pinion wheeling.
> That solitary bird
> Is all that can be heard
> In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon!

The glow-worms are gleaming on the banks, but the stars are dull:

> In hazy straits the clouds between,
> And in their stations twinkling not,
> Some thinly-sprinkled stars are seen
> Each changed into a pallid spot.
> The mountains against heaven's grave weight
> Rise up, and grow to wondrous height.

[1] I quote from a manuscript.

The air, as in a lion's den,
Is close and hot;—and now and then
Comes a tired and sultry breeze
With a haunting and a panting,
Like the stifling of disease . . .

Reading these lines we cannot doubt for a moment that a thunderstorm is brewing. A masterly touch here is the look of the mountains, which seem to rise in portentous height into the leaden sky.

The silence is invaded:

Hush there is someone on the stir!
'Tis Benjamin the Waggoner.

Benjamin is an endearing character: an incomparable hand with his horses, a steady reliable man, with one little weakness, overfondness for the cheerful glass. The storm forecast in the first lines overtakes him as he climbs the hill to Dunmail Raise. Benjamin is strenuously at work urging on his horses up the rugged slope.

The thunder had begun to growl—
He heard not, too intent of soul;
The air was now without a breath—
He marked not that 'twas still as death.
But soon large rain-drops on his head
Fell with the weight of drops of lead;
He starts—and takes at the admonition
A sage survey of his condition
The road is black before his eyes,
Glimmering faintly where it lies;
Black is the sky—and every hill
Up to the sky is blacker still—
Sky, hill, and dale, one dismal room
Hung round and over-hung with gloom;
Save that above a single height
Is to be seen a lurid light,
Above Helm-Crag—a streak half dead,
A burning of portentous red—
But total darkness came anon;
And suddenly a ruffling breeze
Swept through the Hollow long and bare—

The violent drama of a thunderstorm in the mountains follows—no detail of the sound-effects of rain and thunder is lost in the telling:

> The rain rushed down—the road was battered,
> As with the force of billows shattered;
> The horses are dismayed, nor know
> Whether they should stand or go;
> And Benjamin is groping near them,
> Sees nothing and can scarcely hear them.
> He is astounded,—wonder not,—
> With such a charge in such a spot;
> Astounded in the mountain gap
> With thunder-peals, clap after clap,
> Close-treading on the silent flashes—
> And somewhere, as he thinks, by crashes
> Among the rocks; with weight of rain
> And sullen motions long and slow,
> That to a dreary distance go—
> Till breaking in upon the dying strain,
> A rending o'er his head begins the fray again.

The storm is his undoing, for it betrays him into the company of a jovial sailor and with him into the inn at Wythburn, where good company demands generous potations. After a stay of two hours the uplifted pair sally forth to take up their journey through the night. A brilliant 'morning after' brings him into the hands of his master who comes to meet him enraged at his delay.

The whole poem is wrapped in the weather; but the opening passage matters most, as Wordsworth himself knew: it sets the key, suggests the mood and prepares for the central action.

It is significant that Wordsworth often opens a poem with a note about the weather. What he gives is no mere descriptive touch: the weather suggests at once mood and atmosphere, and we soon realise that, however subordinate to the main theme, it is *part of the body and being* of the poem.

> It is a beauteous evening calm and free (*Miscellaneous Sonnets*, xxx)

> It is the first mild day of March ('To my sister')

> 'Tis eight o'clock, a clear March night
> The moon is up: the sky is blue ('The Idiot Boy')

The opening stanza of 'The Sailor's Mother' as Wordsworth first wrote it, makes an unusual impression on the imagination:

> The day was cold and raw and wet
> A foggy day in winter time,
> A Woman in the road I met
> Not old but something past her prime:
> Majestic seem'd she as a mountain storm;
> A Roman matron's gait—like feature and like form,

Now what is the mountain storm doing here? The answer will be found in the weather. It is the sort of day that Dorothy describes in her journal, 'a damp flagging day', and suddenly out of the dullen mist appears this impressive figure. Why did Wordsworth reject the comparison to a mountain storm? Someone to whom he read the poem probably said: 'How can you expect the ordinary reader to see what you mean by comparing a beggar-woman, however tall and majestic, to a mountain storm? The effect is ludicrous.' Let us enter the lists for Wordsworth thus: If you have lived in mountain-country you will have experienced the extraordinary effect of the sudden breaking of a mountain storm: out of a clear sky or out of enveloping mist, almost before you have time to see what is happening, there comes, with an effect alarming or impressive but always exhilarating, an apparition, a cloud-burst that makes you suddenly aware of the hidden *power* of Nature.

So the Beggar-woman emerging unexpectedly from the mist affected Wordsworth.

We can probe a little farther into what Wordsworth is doing as a poetic artist. Every poet must by his art make you enter his world, accept what he tells you as truth, alive and real, something seen in full dimension. All imaginative artists aim at this. A novelist, a teller of tales, must make you feel that he knows what is under the surface of his characters. Henry James has a good phrase for this: the novelist must aim at 'solidity of specification'. How does he, or the poet, achieve it? There are a hundred ways. Bunyan opens his *Pilgrim's Progress* with this simple colloquy:

Evangelist: Do you see yonder wicket gate?
The Man said No.
Evangelist: Do you see yonder shining light?
He said I think I do.

If he had said, 'Yes I do' we should have remained as we were. When he says '*I think I do*', we see him straining his eyes, we believe in him, and we enter with him into his world.

Now the weather is one of the means by which Wordsworth gets this solidity of specification, makes us believe in his scenes, his characters, and the meaning he finds in them. He is not exploiting a deliberate device: like every true artist, he follows the prompting of his own sound lively instinct.

Those who live in the mountains know the unique effect of the cessation of a prolonged bout of rain and storm. Wordsworth records it in some lines jotted in a note-book:

> The rains at length have ceased,
> The stars shine brightly between clouds at rest,
> And as a cavern is with darkness filled
> The Vale is by a mighty sound possessed.

When this same imagery is brought into relation with intense human feeling its power is increased tenfold. Nowhere with more effect than in the well-known lines which he composed on hearing that Charles James Fox was dying, a statesman whom he revered for his humanity. The poet is in his mountain valley on such a night following storm—

> Loud is the Vale! The Voice is up
> With which she speaks when storms are gone,
> A mighty unison of streams!
> Of all her voices, One!
>
> Loud is the Vale;—this inland depth
> In peace is roaring like the Sea;
> Yon star upon the mountain-top
> Is listening quietly.

He has recorded so faithfully the sounds and sights which mark the change to calm weather—the roar of the torrents in the still air and the light of the star over the mountain edge, that we believe him when he tells us of the consolation that came to him from what he heard, saw and felt. Peace came, with a sense of the sureness of the great natural laws: life and death belonged to the eternal ebb and flow.

Sad was I, even to pain deprest,
  Importunate and heavy load!
The Comforter hath found me here,
  Upon this lonely road;

And many thousands now are sad—
  Wait the fulfilment of their fear;
For he must die who is their stay,
  Their glory disappear.

A Power is passing from the earth
  To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart
  What is it more than this—

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
  Doth yet again to God return?—
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
  Then wherefore should we mourn?

A REVIEW OF ENGLISH LITERATURE. Vol. I. No. 4

The Fourth number of this Review will be published on the last Monday in October. It will include *Wyatt Poems in a Dublin Manuscript* by Kenneth Muir; four studies of Macaulay by John Clive, G. S. Fraser, Eric Stokes and C. V. Wedgwood; *Trollope and His Style* by Hugh Sykes Davies and *An Introduction to Bagehot* by John Wain.

Articles previously announced on Marston by Gustav Cross and on Dickens by Angus Wilson will appear in special numbers on drama and on Dickens in 1961.

Romantic Sunset

The purple flare made images, of course,
In the image-mad; and was a purple flare
Of one huge pulse upon the darkening air.

Proximity, too, rolled up its sleeves and took
From nothing there engaging miracles
To make sand not sand and hills sudden hills.

Even a mind, made numinous of itself,
Achieved the image of being an actual fact;
Aesthetics painting what its substance lacked.

And gods, of kinds, and meanings, of a sort,
Emerged from a worn seascape and became
Its substitute, and seemed the very same.

A revelation, murmured the mad mind,
Expanding through affinities till it was
So near divine it just missed being its own Cause.

And contemplations of pure being breathed
Serenity and grace where, overhead,
Blue seduced green and purple savaged red.

Norman MacCaig

Mr. Wilson on the Byzantium Poems

WILLIAM EMPSON

THE analysis[1] by Mr. Wilson of the two poems about Byzantium has raised no objection that I have seen, and I suppose is thoroughly in the modern movement, but seems to me very strange. Surely, at least, not all critics would agree with his statement that 'Byzantium, then, is Elysium, the "country of the young" '. In *Sailing to Byzantium* the country of the young is Ireland, and that is why the ageing Yeats has sailed away from it. He calls it *That* because he is looking back at it; 'therefore (because it is no country for old men) I have sailed to Byzantium' ends the second verse of *Sailing to Byzantium*. I do not believe that the Bosphorus has either salmon-falls or mackerel-crowded seas; it is a basic trouble about critics who revere 'symbolism' that they will not allow the literal meaning any weight at all. Mr. Wilson gives an interesting quotation from the first draft, which would prove that Ireland is meant if any proof were needed:

> Here all is young . . .
> Weary with toil Teigue sleeps till break of day

An Irish pet name for the Irish is not a thing an Irish Nationalist could use for the population of Byzantium, and Mr. Wilson gives no reason for supposing he did.

The effect of the mistake is that Mr. Wilson ignores the 'story', the actual human situation which the poet is describing with much humour and good sense; hence he is deaf to the changes of tone which are a major beauty of the poem. He contentedly says, of

[1] F. A. C. Wilson, *W. B. Yeats and Tradition*, Gollancz, 1958.

both poems as I understand, 'the action takes place in the heavenly world', and thereafter any symbolism used by any mystic can be piled on to the words so long as it makes them imply disgust for all human experience. But the real action is rather saltily in this world; Yeats is planning his strategy as a Grand Old Man. 'Obviously I shall get jeered at in Dublin if I act young any longer; I shall have to find how to turn myself into a monument of intellect.' It is a libel on Yeats to suppose he could write down that phrase about himself without intending it to be rather funny.

The third verse, I readily agree, is entirely serious; he feels the need to prepare his soul for death, he reverences the saints who have done so, also he reverences the other-worldly art of Byzantium; a very specific historical style which he connects with a current movement of taste, the Cubists and T. E. Hulme and Boris Anrep (he did the floor of the entrance to the National Gallery, but there he was anxious not to compete with the paintings; Yeats would think of him as the one man who was actually making for churches mosaics which felt as spiritually thrilling as the Byzantine ones by the same occasional use of jagged stone) and so forth. Also he seriously believed that Europe was entering a new Dark Age, and may have been right; the chief point about Byzantium was that it survived for a thousand years which included the Dark Ages, so that it, or its destruction, could help to start the Renaissance at the other end. This pickled culture was obviously what a wise old poet ought now to make a spiritual migration to. But in the fourth and last verse, when he describes himself as succeeding at this line of effort, he shows exquisite good taste in making himself funny; it is one sentence of continually delicious hesitating rhythm, full of the lilting flipness of the comic prose of Oscar Wilde. Nobody who had once experienced the beauty of the poem could be induced to turn back and read into it Mr. Wilson's interpretation.

It is as well for me to insist that this internal literary ground is what seems to me decisive, and not some ideological one, because Mr. Wilson produced rather alarming evidence, from Yeats's letters to Sturge Moore, that he took a solemn view of the bird

which ends the poem. I recognize of course that he felt it as a rich inclusive symbol, and he was accustomed to treat his work with due solemnity; also he might think it rather indecent to explain the exact tone he had intended to Sturge Moore, and anyhow keeping his tongue in his cheek was one of his dearest pleasures. One could see plenty of these mechanical singing birds in the Forbidden City at Peking, though I think the Communists have got tired of showing them; Queen Victoria used to send them to the Empress Dowager. These ones were heavily jewelled, but I was shown a less expensive one working when I was a child, and I expect Yeats was too. No great reverence can be felt for them; what Yeats is saying is 'I tell you what I'll do; I'll turn myself into one of those clockwork dickey-birds, in a gilt cage'.

Consider, few poets have cared to write down 'When I die I shall go to Heaven'. They would feel it bad luck as well as bad taste, and Yeats was not at all the man to feel otherwise. Then, as to symbolism, the more you think of birds as able to take messages up to Heaven, intensely spontaneous in their lyrics, and so forth, the more a clockwork bird with a built-in tweet-tweet is bound to seem pathetically ludicrous. Just the thing to please children, on the other hand, and there the poet does retain a firm contact with the world of the young which he must now school himself to leave. No doubt he felt sure that the Byzantines, if they too could make this machine as he says he has read somewhere, would make it an impressive piece of sculpture; so there is a genuine boast about himself, but it is wry enough to be sweet. Perhaps some readers will deny that the toy is meant to 'work'; but it is said to sing, that is how it will keep a drowsy emperor awake. Yeats, with his distaste for the machine age, cannot be supposed to give himself hearty praise in his incarnation as such a thing.

A similar point urgently needs to be made about the first four lines of the second poem, *Byzantium*. Mr. Wilson says about them:

> Since Yeats did not write long stretches of mere imagery, all this has to be assigned some meaning beyond the merely literal.

I find here a breath-taking assumption that language can never be

used to tell a story; that the only 'literal' meaning it can have is the pictures it makes in your head. Surely it is enough to point out that the lines have a perfectly straightforward meaning, one which is greatly to the credit of Yeats's good sense. To begin with, he would know that the actual life of the holy city was monotonously shocking, or at any rate appears so in Gibbon, the obvious place for him to look. The emperors regularly murdered and tortured their relations, while the mass of the population was locked in an entirely fatuous struggle between the Green and Blue factions of the circus, a canalization of their inherent brutality which might have been invented for *1984*. Yeats made clear enough that he knew this in the lyrical prose sentence about Byzantium which set the stage for both poems; if he were offered a magical choice, he said:

> I would choose to spend my month in Byzantium, a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato. I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even, for the pride of his delicate skill would make what was an instrument of power in princes and clerics, a murderous madness in the mob, show as a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect human body.
>
> (*A Vision*, p. 231)

This rigid mummified type of society, with its fierce suppression of natural impulse and its immensely exalted anti-natural art, is precisely where all experience outside the art is reduced to 'the fury and the mire of human veins'; that is why Yeats makes so much of the contrast here. He has been accused of Fascism, but he seems to have regarded the totalitarian state as merely a dismal necessity of the coming stage of history, as of some previous ones. Not at all surprisingly, then, the spiritual tourist is found at the beginning of the poem disillusioned by what he has seen of Byzantium in the daytime; what he has come there for can only be found after dark, in the dreams of the city's ghosts. It is hard on Yeats, as a political thinker at any rate, that his interpreters are so determined to love religious tyranny that they positively cannot imagine his meaning when he says he doesn't love it.

The first two lines of the poem, then, dismiss the life of the holy city with curt contempt. The rest of the first verse, very sensitive and imaginative, is direct description of it at night:

> The unpurged images of day recede;
> The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed.
> Night's resonance recedes, night-walker's song
> After great cathedral gong.
> A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
> All that man is;
> All mere complexities;
> The fury and the mire of human veins.

Presumably midnight tolls out, and belated revellers going home can be heard surprisingly far off; in the ensuing peace, the superb architecture despises the people of the city. One therefore listens to the silence, and is prepared to meet what is apparently the ghost of a statue. This is very fine, and there is no occasion to explain it away as 'symbolic'; though certainly the literal details come to be felt to carry extra meanings. Such is the normal process; Dante took for granted that his allegory must be accepted as a story before its extra meanings could grow in the mind, and why may not poor Yeats write an allegory too?

Throughout the third verse of *Byzantium*, and only there, the clockwork dickey-bird reappears, in an even more rippingly aristocratic frame of mind, scolding like Donald Duck. That it 'can like the cocks of Hades crow' is a splendid riddle, and Mr. Wilson may be right in saying that this process could call a soul to 'the necessity of reincarnation'. I do not think he need go on to take for granted that Hades is Heaven, and that the toy is 'perched at the very summit of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life'. If the poet meant that, he failed to express it; and he does on the other hand convey strongly though mysteriously that tart sense of the paradoxes of life with which he has already made us familiar. 'Or', says the verse, meaning perhaps 'if not imposing an unwelcome reincarnation', the bird can simply 'scorn' with a raucous cry all 'common', that is, real, birds and flowers. The poor toy is described as embittered by the moon, usually expected to recall

tender memories, so it seems to have got mixed up with one of the holy palace eunuchs. Here again it is a libel on Yeats to assume he greatly admired the frame of mind he describes. He could indeed mean to present himself, and Dean Swift too, as this scolding toy, but neither his good taste nor his Irish bitterness would have let him feel it as a simple dreamy deification.

Neo-Christian critics should recognize, surely, that Yeats still refused to become a Christian even while his final plays were showing a rather horrible interest in the mysticism of sacrifice. He is not as other-worldly as Mr. Wilson makes him. Mysteriously enormous as the short poem contrives to feel, chiefly I think by the sharp changes of tone which make each verse seem a separate jagged block in the mosaic, thus taking even further the technique of the first Byzantium poem, it does not rise out of the world but presents at the end the forces in conflict as eternal, and presents the conflict with exaltation. The word *break*, used twice in the last verse, is I think more ambiguous than Yeats intended; or rather, when he introduced it with the phrase 'break the flood', he thought that that would define the second use, because he expected his readers to know how a breakwater acts. It is built out into the sea, and prevents the waves from harming the land not by simply rebuffing them but by a more artful process of distracting them and in a sense yielding to them. A symbolist critic like Mr. Wilson despises the world far too much even to want to know any such thing; and yet it is only by this more humane interpretation that I can find any sense in saying that the marbles of the dancing floor break the passions. A veto upon dancing would be the way to disrupt them, but the dancing floor is a place where they can work out their energies harmoniously. The last word of Mr. Wilson on the poem is that *gong-tormented* sea means 'man's life . . . is endlessly tormented by the idea of death', and this seems to me merely cynical; the way the cathedral bell really torments the people is by giving them difficult aspirations to engage in more noble activity.

I find I get this reaction again and again; what our present commentators offer proudly as a specially high-minded interpretation seems to me, morally speaking, a nasty-minded one, so that it is a hopelessly wrong account of the poem in view.

D. H. Lawrence and Blanche Jennings

KENNETH and MIRIAM ALLOTT

ALDOUS HUXLEY'S *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (1932) contains no letters from Eastwood, Lawrence's Nottinghamshire birthplace, before he left there to begin teaching Standard IV at the Davidson Road Schools, Croydon, on 12 October 1908; and the only letters of 1909 in the collection are a business note of 15 December offering *The White Peacock* to William Heinemann and a four-line scrap from a letter to H. C. (Helen Corke). The Eastwood blank is understandable—Lawrence had no need to write to friends who lived there and he had few friends as yet anywhere else. We might have hoped for more letters from the first Croydon year, but apparently Huxley had at his disposal fragments only of the Helen Corke correspondence, Jessie Chambers destroyed her letters from Lawrence after quoting them in her memoir,[1] and Lawrence's letters to his mother are unmentioned in all the literature that has sprung up about him since 1930. (Perhaps they were destroyed after her death in 1910.) For the shape of Lawrence's life before the end of 1909 we have to rely on the recollections of numerous people who knew him at Eastwood and Croydon.[2] When these recollections converge they give us a comforting feeling of authenticity, but if letters are the life-giving sap of biography some interest attaches to the recent discovery of a series of Lawrence letters to a previously unknown correspondent in Liverpool. The letters are twenty in number and stretch from April 1908 to January 1910.

[1] *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*, 1935.

[2] See, for example, H. T. Moore's *The Intelligent Heart*, 1955 or the first volume of E. Nehl, *D. H. Lawrence: a Composite Biography*, 1957.

Blanche Jennings, who worked for the Post Office at Liverpool and was an enthusiast for socialism and Women's Suffrage, probably met Lawrence at the end of 1907 or the beginning of 1908. To Alice Dax's unconventional home at Eastwood, the Pagans, a group consisting almost exclusively of young people who had been Lawrence's fellow pupil-teachers at Ilkeston, naturally gravitated—in much the same way that they crowded in through Sallie Hopkin's 'open door' on Sunday evenings for talk, music, food and discussion.[1] Mrs. Dax and Mrs. Hopkin were close friends. At both houses Lawrence could meet Labour leaders, Shavians, rationalists, agnostics, progressive intellectuals of all shades of opinion—such people as Edward Carpenter, the Webbs, Keir Hardie and Ramsay Macdonald—and it was in fact at Mrs. Dax's that he met Blanche Jennings, probably after a Nottingham rally in favour of the Women's Cause. In the free and easy atmosphere she was soon calling him David, as he recalls in his first letter to her. It arrived at Liverpool out of the blue on 15 April 1908, begging her to read and criticise his first novel *The White Peacock*, then known as *Laetitia*:[2]

> . . . it is a novel of sentiment—may the devil fly away with it—what the critics would call, I believe, an 'erotic novel'—the devil damn the whole race black—, all about love—and rhapsodies on Spring scattered here and there—heroines galore—no plot—nine-tenths adjectives—every colour in the spectrum descanted upon—a poem or two—scraps of Latin and French—altogether a sloppy, spicy mess. (15 April 1908.)

He was not eager, he told her, to learn whether it was a work of art by 'tests of artistic principles, and such-like jargon', but he did want to know whether it was 'bright, entertaining, convincing—or the reverse'. He excused the unconventionality of his approach by appealing to her as an emancipated woman and by the admission 'I am very young—though twenty-two; I have never left my mother, you see'. Blanche Jennings was only twenty-seven herself

[1] See Enid Hilton's recollections in H. T. Moore's *The Intelligent Heart*, pp. 95–96.

[2] *Laetitia* was the title of the two Eastwood versions of *The White Peacock*; *Nethermere* the title of later versions of the novel at Croydon. Lawrence finally settled on *The White Peacock* as a title in 1910.

and from her photographs not unattractive, but Lawrence teasingly pretended to regard her as a 'safe wise elder'—a slightly less than tactful insurance against misconstruction. Although Mrs. Dax certainly visited Miss Jennings at Liverpool in the summer of 1908, bringing with her direct news of Eastwood and the manuscript of *Laetitia*, and may have visited her again later in 1908 and also in 1909, it seems that Lawrence and Blanche Jennings did not meet again while they were correspondents. But into this friendship conducted by the penny post Lawrence poured for the something over a year that it really lasted a great deal of himself: his literary hopes, his despondencies, his tastes in reading, fumblings towards a personal *Weltanschauung*, gossip, snapshots of the daily scene.

> Because you are nearly a stranger, and one may always scatter the seeds of one's secret soul out to a stranger, hoping to find there fertile soil to replace the exhausted home earth, to which we will not, even cannot, confide what is precious to us; so, because you are a cold stranger, and not my mother or my bosom friend, I will come to you for sympathy with that sore, that sickness of mine which is called 'Laetitia', 'Laetitia' of whom my mother will say nothing except 'I wish you had written on another line'—of whom Mrs. Dax says scarcely anything, not being very interested. But you are not a cold stranger—you are a good deal like me in temperament, I think. (4 May 1908.)

She was not in the least like him and even then Lawrence must have known it, but he badly wanted someone to spill himself to on paper and—particularly in the early letters—he set himself out to wheedle and charm. Blanche Jennings, amused and touched, replied banteringly to the first letters, and before she knew it found herself caught up in a whirling new relationship. She was the right correspondent for Lawrence at this stage. She had read as many but quite different books, she had had to make her own way in the world and discover her own point of view and therefore did not knuckle down to his vehemence, providing just enough opposition to goad him into expansive self-expression. His mode of address ripens from 'Dear Miss Jennings' to 'Dear B' and 'Sweet Bee' in those letters in which he did not plunge without preamble into what he had to say. The letters are coltishly intelligent, brilliantly and sensuously alive, dashed with self-pity,

occasionally—as towards the end at Croydon when he had other fish to fry and his need for this friendship was waning—streaked with the familiar cruelty; they reveal his phenomenal early command of scene and atmosphere; and they bring us close to the writing and re-writing of *The White Peacock*. But before turning to the actual letters something needs to be said about Blanche Jennings.

Lawrence's correspondent was the younger of the two children of a master mariner from King's Lynn, Norfolk, who settled his family in Liverpool in 1880. Blanche was born in January 1881, had only an elementary school education, and became a counter-clerk in a sub post-office as soon as she left school. Her father died in an accident at sea in 1895 when she was fourteen, and difficult times for her mother, her brother and herself followed. She was an intelligent girl and the disabilities imposed by a lack of education made her angry. She passed the Limited Examination open to clerks in her position and was appointed to the Head Post Office, where, according to a colleague, she 'immediately became the centre of a circle of girls, due to her liveliness, outspoken manner and laughter'. Outside working-hours she began to educate herself by reading, turned socialist, devoted herself to liberal causes, particularly to the cause of Women's Rights, and soon found like-minded people to associate with. She had a brusque impatience with stuffy respectabilities and of course she read Carlyle and Ruskin, Shaw and Wells. She welcomed free-thinking in religion. She never had the leisure to be a blue stocking, but when Lawrence wanted to be scornful, as he did when their friendship was no longer so useful to him, he could accuse her of being doctrinaire and too fond of abstractions.

> You can't appreciate Manon Lescaut. What can you appreciate but something with a series of labels attached bearing scientific names? You have cultivated a sort of ethic-intellectualism—flat thought pansies—to the exclusion of everything sweeping and throbbing. Manon Lescaut is fine—you're narrow. You've shut up your vitalities in a few tight boxes—like J. M. Robertson.[1] (8 May 1909.)

[1] A post-card addressed to Blanche Jennings by a Liverpool friend (21 August 1909) reminds her that 'J. M. Robertson is due at Aintree next Thursday evening to speak on the Budget. Will you go?'

He adds in the same letter, 'I am grown up, I am tremendously grown up—well, I don't care if you won't believe it, it's truth'. (Compare the 'I am very young' of the first letter.)

This was the real end of their intimacy, although there are two more letters in the series, one of 1 November 1909 and the other of 28 January 1910.[1] In the first of the two letters, which was written after an interval of seven months, and then almost certainly in reply to a postcard of congratulation on the appearance of his poems in the November 1909 issue of the *English Review*, Lawrence speaks of 'how in the ordinary insignificant manner our chapter . . . dribbled to an end' in the previous May, is puzzled to remember 'wherein I insulted you', and wonders if his letter will be an epilogue or the beginning of a new chapter. It was not quite an epilogue, but neither was it a new chapter. The friendship could not take a sudden upward turn. In the last letter of 28 January 1910 Lawrence chats about his sentimental involvements at Croydon—his disillusionment with Agnes Holt, his growing interest in Helen Corke—and promises to say more on the subject the 'next time I write', but there was no next time. Blanche Jennings never married—for a woman in her position the choice had still to be made in those days between marriage and a career. From her brother's marriage in 1907 until her mother's death in 1927 she made a home for her mother. On her retirement in 1941 she was superintendent of the Leece Street Post Office in Liverpool and still actively interested in progressive causes. According to the colleague already mentioned, the Lawrence interlude was 'one of the high-lights of her life undoubtedly'. The photograph of himself that he sent her at Christmas 1908 remained on her mantelpiece for years. She read his novels, but the same friend recalls that she was 'more interested in his life and personality than in his books', although she had a genuine admiration for *Sons and Lovers*. She died at Liverpool in 1944 and her letters from Lawrence came into the possession of her brother, Victor Winslow Jennings, a glass designer at St. Helens, and on his death in 1951 passed into

[1] Misdated 1909 by Lawrence, but references in the letter make the correction certain.

the hands of his daughter, Miss Ellaline Jennings, who is now an art-teacher at a St. Helens secondary school. It is to her generosity that we are indebted for a sight of the letters and for information about her aunt.[1]

The White Peacock was Lawrence's excuse for opening the correspondence with Blanche Jennings, and both before and after she read it he explains defensively and at length how he came to write the novel. In 1907 during his first year of training at Nottingham for the teacher's certificate,

> . . . three parts of my time I was bored till college boredom became a disease. Moreover I was suffering acutely from Carlyliophobia, which you will understand if that rabid philosopher has ever bitten you; and lastly, I was sore, frightfully raw and sore because I couldn't get the religious conversion, the Holy Ghost business, that I longed for. It was imperative that I should do something, so I began to write a novel—or rather, I resumed a work I had begun some months before—two years last Easter . . .
>
> Well, when my boyhood—and I was a born boy, cut out for eternal boyishness—began to drop from me as the grains drop one by one from a head of oats, or ten at a time when rudely shaken, then I began to write. Consequently I wrote with crude sentimentality, being sick, having lost the health of my laddishness . . .[2] I finished the first writing last June—since then I have written the whole thing again. But I have been at Coll. this year—and I have been irritated between duty to swot Latin and trigonometry and my impulse to write. So, much of Laetitia is poor stuff, I fear, and I shall have it all to do over again.[3] (4 May 1908.)

He returns to the subject in another letter.

> One little thing I will say seriously. Laetitia was written during the year that I changed from boyhood to manhood, my first year in College. It is a

[1]Acknowledgement is also owed to William Heinemann Ltd. and the D. H. Lawrence Estate for permission to quote from the letters in this article. The letters to Blanche Jennings will be printed in full in Mr. H. T. Moore's new edition of Lawrence's letters, which is nearing completion and will replace the Huxley edition of 1932.

[2]cf. Keats's apology for greensickness in the Preface to *Endymion*.

[3]The chronology here has points of interest. The novel was begun at Easter 1906 and then laid aside; it was resumed (not begun as Aldington says in his introduction to the 1950 Heinemann Pocket Edition) in the autumn of 1906 and completed by June 1907; and it was re-written by May 1908. Two versions, then, precede the Croydon rewritings.

frightful experience to grow up, I think, it hurts horribly . . . Then the prof's in coll. went on in such a miserable jog-trot, earn-your-money manner that I was startled . . . I doubted them, I began to despise or distrust things; I lost my rather deep religious faith; I lost my idealism and my wistfulness, and I wrote Laetitia in that year. Now I have weaned myself from folks and God and my young dreams. (1 September 1908.)

Obviously Lawrence was aware that *Laetitia* had many imperfections. Sometimes he explodes impatiently 'I shrink from the thought of any one reading that work—if I were not vain and poor I should like to put it in the fire', but all the same he is immensely irritated when Mrs. Dax has had his novel a fortnight and has read a volume of Ibsen and other books in preference to it.

I cannot cure myself of the most woful of youth's follies—thinking that those who care about us will care for the things that mean much to us. Only one girl, who is in love with me, and whom I do not love . . . cares deeply for my writing; but she is valueless because she approves too much:—valueless as a critic, I mean.[1] (4 May 1908.)

At other times he is buoyantly and justifiably confident about the quality of parts of his work:

I shan't tell you another thing about that girl. As for my forte, nothing and everything is my forte . . . In Laetitia there is, I would declare it in the teeth of all the jabbering critics in the world, some beautiful writing—there are some exquisite passages, such as I shall not write again . . . You say I have a sane critic in Mrs. Dax—a sane critic in a woman who is fond of me!—and you know human nature! . . . she carefully criticises, like a mother who reads her son's school essay. She does not know that I must flaw my English if I am to be anything but a stilted, starched person . . . (13 May 1908.)

or, again, he is caught in two minds between humility and pride:

I doubt whether Mrs. Dax will ever say much more to me about the stuff—she is not impressed, or ill impressed; see then how execrable it must be. I am inclined to blush for myself—I know there is such a lot of crude sentimentality in it, & youthful gusty sighing, bungling insupportable. Nevertheless there

[1] The reference is to Jessie Chambers.

is some real good stuff—a good deal that Mrs. Dax never sees, for she only cares about whether such people could really exist, and live like other folk in the midst of neighbours, chapels and mothers-in-law; whereas I don't care a damn whether they live or whether they don't—there are some rather fine scenes and effects. (15 June 1908.)

By the end of July 1908 Blanche Jennings had read the novel, which Mrs. Dax had brought to Liverpool, and had forwarded her tactful comments on it to Lawrence at Eastwood.

Your remarks on Laetitia are exceedingly just. If you think it worth the trouble, I will write the thing again, and stop up the mouth of Cyril—I will kick him out—I hate the fellow. I will give Lettie a few rough shakings; I will keep Alice all the way through . . . The sheep-worrying incident is real—actual—dogs get a sheep-worrying habit—they have the instinct to begin with.

Thanks very much for the notes. They will be valuable. I wish there had been more of them. You will be sick if you have to read it again; but tell me, please, everything you can think of. Have you anything to say on the Annable part? Is it really coarse (Mrs. Dax says it is)? Shall I introduce more characters? Shall I leave out lots of incidents? I *will* leave out Cyril, the fool.[1] (30 July 1908.)

The manuscript of *Laetitia* remained at Liverpool until the autumn. At the end of October, when Lawrence had settled into his Croydon lodgings and decided that he would not study for a degree but instead comfort his 'poor soap-bubble of a soul with writing', he began to think seriously about the novel again.

I want to have another whack at Laetitia, to take the sentimentality out of her. I long to be a dear little God, and evolve her soul, or metempsychose it . . .

All this is a prelude to my request that you will send me here part of Laetitia—send me a bit of the dear girl, and after a while the other bit. She is a lump to send all at once, bless her! We will count up the stamps when she has come home to me, when I can put her sweet limbs together again, and mend her as Isis mended the scattered fragments of the beautiful Truth, whom the bull-god had trampled and torn in the open wastes of the desert world. Hooray, there's a bit of wild Egyptology! . . .

Give me some sound advice concerning Laetitia, the joyful one. Shall I make her longer or shorter, fatter or frailer, a Burne-Jonesian or a Moore? I will certainly squash the sticky juice of sentimentality out of her . . .

[1] Mrs. Dax had also objected to Cyril. Cyril, who is the narrator, is a projection of Lawrence himself.

Hurray—one thing I can do—I can juggle with words: get a white rabbit out of a silk hat, or a turtle dove out of a black saucepan—into which I had only rattled peas. Hurray—I like having a bit of fun with words. (26 October 1908.)

By the beginning of November he was reading the bulky manuscript in the evenings after school, and a week or so later he is full of plans for improving *Laetitia*.

It bores me mightily in parts. You can none of you find one essence of its failure: it is that I have dragged in conversations to explain matters that two lines of ordinary prose would have accomplished far better; I must cut out many pages of talk, and replace them with a few paragraphs of plain description or narrative; secondly, one is cloyed with metaphoric fancy; thirdly, folk talk about themes too much;—slight incidents—such as the sugar in Eugenie[1]—should display character, not fine speeches; fourthly, I don't believe Lettie ever did break her engagement with Leslie—she married him. The construction—changeable and erratic as it is—is defensible; there are some fine, swift bits, e.g. the latter half of the party; there are some strong scenes, e.g.—the churchyard scene with Annable, the motor accident, and, for a moment, Leslie's appeal to Lettie when he comes to her sick, also the death of the father; there is some rare suggestiveness—the burial of the keeper, the idiot girl 'Christmass'.[2] The father scene is not superfluous. I will defend my construction throughout.

The characters are often weak—the men—George and Leslie especially. Lettie herself is not bad. The rest are undeveloped. What the whole thing needs is that the essential should be differentiated from the non-essential. I will have another go at it this winter. The theme is abominable—I blush for myself . . . With a true womanly wit, you fell out with details that didn't matter.[3] (11 November 1908.)

A few days before Christmas 1908 we find Lawrence defending himself against the accusation that he knows too little of life. He admits that he does not know how to behave at a public dinner or a ball, that his knowledge of aristocratic life is only from books, and that he cannot recognise at a glance a 'femme perdue'. But of Life with the capital letter he knows quite enough for his purposes. This letter (22 December 1908) was written on holiday

[1] Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet*, Chap. III.

[2] The idiot girl is missing from *The White Peacock* in its published form.

[3] These remarks should be considered beside Jessie Chambers's account of the eastwood versions of *The White Peacock* in *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*.

at Eastwood, but in the next (20 January 1909) he is back at Croydon writing verses and revising *Laetitia*, which he is surprised to find so maudlin. Four poems accompany this letter—'Ten Months Old', 'A Winter's Tale', 'Cherry Robbers' and 'Renaissance'. Three of these poems are immediately recognisable, but the fourth, 'Ten Months Old', was completely rewritten and given a new title 'Trailing Clouds' in 1909. It finally appeared in Lawrence's *Complete Poems* with further small verbal changes and a third title 'A Baby Asleep after Pain'. The original version is worth preserving.

Ten Months Old

See how she snuggles against my neck—
My wee mouse—
And her fingers move in the ruts of my ears
And my throat is wet with her tears.

I can just see the nape of her little white neck
My pale, wet butterfly—
The red is a cloud of thistledown
Soft, tickling brown.

I cannot call her 'Sweet Joy' now—
My wee squirrel—
She is no longer two days old—
'Twas a tale soon told.

And dark now is the sky she came through
—My white bird—
Heavy with drops of the first keen rain
—Tears for her pain.

There, press your hot red cheek against mine
—My own baby—
There, for the heat of it causes a smart,
Stinging down to my heart.[1]

[1]The baby was Hilda Mary Jones, his landlady's daughter at Croydon. Lawrence glossed the poem for Blanche Jennings: 'This is perhaps the first teething-song; perhaps you know Meredith's "Where did you come from baby dear?" and Blake's "I have no name, I am but two days old—Sweet Joy I'll call thee"—those are the references.' The other three poems in the letter of 20 January 1909 all have some verbal differences from the versions in *Complete Poems* (1957). To 'Renaissance' Lawrence added a short explanatory note.

The next reference to *Laetitia* comes after a long interval in November 1909. By this date, as a result of Jessie Chambers's enterprise, Lawrence had had some poems accepted by *The English Review* and had met the editor Ford Madox Hueffer twice.

I have just sent up to Mr. Hueffer my novel, which I have re-written, and which is much altered. I have added a third part, have married Lettie and Leslie and George and Meg, and Emily to a stranger and myself to nobody. Oh Lord—what a farce. (1 November 1909.)

And in the final letter of the whole series, written 28 January 1910, he drops his great news to Blanche Jennings with an affectation of casualness.

I have a few little newses to tell you. First—there is a story of mine coming in the Feby Review. Second—Heinemann is going to take my novel and publish it, giving me royalties. That's all for the moment.[1]

The letter of 1 November 1909 had referred to 'a new girl down here: you know my kind, a girl to whom I gas' and in that of 28 January 1910 she re-appeared briefly as 'a girl who "interests" me —nothing else . . . call her Helène'. Most of this letter is given up to Agnes Holt, 'rather a striking girl with much auburn hair', whose respect for the proprieties led Lawrence to call her a 'timid duffer', and to Jessie Chambers—

At Christmas an old fire burned up afresh, like an alcohol flame, faint and invisible, that sets fire to a tar barrel. It is the old girl who has been attached to me for so long—

but it is clear that Lawrence's intimacy with Helen Corke, briefly and passingly as she is mentioned, was growing in importance, and that as their intimacy grew so his need for a confidante at a distance lessened. There were no more letters to Blanche Jennings then, but Lawrence remembered her more than five years later when he wrote to W. E. Hopkin about *The Signature*.[2] In this letter of 14 September 1915 he wants Sallie Hopkin to write to Mrs. Dax about

[1] The February 1910 number of *The English Review* contains Lawrence's short story 'The Goose Fair'.

[2] *The Signature* ran to three issues in October and November 1915. Lawrence's contribution 'The Crown', a speculative essay, was divided up between them. John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield were other contributors.

his paper and hopes that Alice Dax in turn will approach one or two people in Liverpool—'Blanche Jennings, for instance'. Alice Dax and Blanche Jennings were people whom Lawrence still thought of in November 1915 as likely to be interested in 'my essential beliefs, the ideas I struggle with . . . a new movement for real life and real freedom'.[1] If Blanche Jennings, as a Liverpool friend recalls, 'met Frieda and once stayed at Lawrence's cottage with them', it is likely that this letter to W. E. Hopkin in 1915 had something to do with it. The cottage was probably the one at Zennor and the visit would therefore be paid in 1916 or 1917. There must have been a brief renewal of correspondence, probably early in 1916, but no letters have survived from it and how successful the visit was we are left guessing.

The interest of Lawrence's letter to Blanche Jennings in connection with *The White Peacock* is not exhausted by the passages already quoted. Anyone familiar with the novel will observe in reading through the letters how much new autobiographical material from 1908 was worked into the final Croydon rewriting. Two examples are provided by a single scene in Chapter III, 'A Vendor of Visions'. This is the intense, not to say absurd, little scene between George Saxton and Lettie when they look through a book of reproductions of paintings. Half way through the scene Lettie finally gathers up the various books on the table and flaunts herself in a 'fine' pose at the doorway. Then she disappears for a moment and returns talking madly to herself in French. Lawrence comments:

> Having been much impressed by Sarah Bernhardt's 'Dame aux Camelias' and 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' Lettie had caught something of the weird tone of this great actress, and her raillery and mockery came out in little wild waves.[2]

Moore notes that Sarah Bernhardt's performance in *La Dame aux Camélias* so terrified Lawrence that he rushed out of the theatre, but the fullest account of its effect on him (minus the 'rushing out' detail) comes in a letter to Blanche Jennings.

[1] Huxley's *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 255.

[2] Pocket Edition, pp. 46–47.

Sarah Bernhardt was wonderful and terrible. She opened up the covered tragedy that works the grimaces of this wonderful dime show. Oh, to see her, and to hear her, a wild creature, a gazelle with a beautiful panther's fascination and fury, laughing in musical French, screaming with true panther cry, sobbing and sighing like a deer sobs, and all the time with the sheen of silk, the glitter of diamonds, the moving of men's handsomely groomed figures about her. She is not pretty, her voice is not sweet—but there she is, the incarnation of wild emotion which we share with all live things, but which is gathered in us in all complexity and inscrutable fury . . . I could love such a woman myself, love her to madness, all for the pure wild passion of it. Intellect is shed as flowers shed their petals. Take care about going to see Bernhardt. Unless you are very sound, do not go. When I think of her now I can still feel the weight hanging in my chest as it hung there for days after I saw her . . .[1] (25 June 1908.)

In the earlier part of the scene in the novel George and Lettie have come across a plate of 'Maurice Griffenhagen's "Idyll"' in their book of reproductions, and George points to it with a peculiar emphasis.

'What of it?' she asked, gradually flushing. She remembered her own enthusiasm over the picture.

'Wouldn't it be fine?' he exclaimed, looking at her with glowing eyes, his teeth showing white in a smile that was not amusement.

'What?' she asked, dropping her head in confusion.

'That—a girl like that—half afraid—and passion!' He lit up curiously.

'She may well be afraid, when the barbarian comes out in his glory, skins and all.'[2]

A strangled moment or two later George says he has never seen the picture before, and Lettie is surprised because it 'is a very common one'. Then, as they look 'nakedly' at each other and dark electricity plays between them:

'I believe it's in Liverpool, the picture,' she contrived to say.

He dared not kill this conversation, he was too self-conscious. He forced himself to reply, 'I didn't know there was a gallery in Liverpool.'

'Oh, yes, a very good one,' she said.

Their eyes met in the briefest flash of a glance, then both turned their faces aside.[3]

[1] Lawrence saw this performance in Nottingham on 15 June 1908.

[2] Pocket Edition, p. 44.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Lawrence's acquaintance with Greiffenhagen's 'Idyll' seems to have begun at Christmas 1908 when in return for a photograph of himself he received from Blanche Jennings a copy of A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* and a reproduction of the painting. For Housman Lawrence hardly had a good word—'He is no poet; he can only sing the stale tale of the bankruptcy of life,—in death. I believe he comes of a consumptive family. I believe he himself is consumptive. Bah!'—but Greiffenhagen bowled him over.

> As for Greiffenhagen's 'Idyll', it moves me almost as much as if I were fallen in love myself. Under its intoxication, I have flirted madly this Christmas; I have flirted myself half in love; I have flirted somebody else further, till two solicitous persons have begun to take me to task; it is largely the effect of your 'Idyll' that has made me kiss a certain girl till she hid her head in my shoulder; but what a beautiful soft throat, and a round smooth chin, she has; and what bright eyes, looking up! Mon Dieu, I am really half in love! But not with the splendid uninterrupted passion of the 'Idyll'. I am too conscious, and vaguely troubled. (31 December 1908.)

Lettie was right about the whereabouts of the picture and its popularity. The 'Idyll' is in the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool, though mercifully no longer on public exhibition. Between its first appearance in the Royal Academy in 1896 and 1908 this painting, which made Greiffenhagen's popular reputation, was frequently reproduced—even on calendars and Christmas cards. Blanche Jennings had a framed reproduction of it in her home. The interesting thing is not that Lawrence did not recognize immediately the cheapness of its appeal, but that he remained so faithful to his first ecstatic impression of the picture. It intruded into *The White Peacock* in 1909 as we have seen. He was copying it on the night that his mother lay dying in December 1910 and about that time he gave copies of it that he had made both to his sister Ada and to one of his Eastwood loves, Louie Burrows.[1] In 1912 he wrote to A. W. Macleod from Gargnano saying that he had 'done' four pictures and that he would do the 'Idyll' too if a copy of it were sent to him.[2] As late as 1916 he was lamenting to Catherine

[1] Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Carswell from Zennor, 'Greiffenhagen seems to be slipping back and back. I suppose it has to be.'[1]

The 'Idyll' is mentioned once more in *The White Peacock* in Chapter Five, when Lettie tells George, who is mowing in the sunlit fields, that he is picturesque and 'Quite fit for an Idyll'. His arms, she says, tempt her to touch them because they are so hard and brown. George offers her his arm to feel and she draws her finger-tips along the 'smooth brown muscle'. He laughs.

'You feel so fine', he said, pushing his hand through his open shirt front, and gently rubbing the muscles of his side. 'It's a pleasure to work or to stand still. It's a pleasure to yourself—your own physique.'[2]

This quotation parallels a passage in one of the letters to Blanche Jennings. After finishing at the Normal School in Nottingham, and while waiting for a teaching appointment, Lawrence worked in the hayfields with the Chambers family in the summer of 1908 and enjoyed himself enormously. (The fields were those rented at Greasley, several miles from the Haggs.)

About half an hour ago I came in from the hayfield where I have been working for the past fortnight. I have had a bath, a delicious cold bath, and half eaten half a fruit pie. Now I am as complacent as a God.

My hands are brown, hard and coarse, my face is gradually tanning. Aren't you glad? I have really worked hard; I can pick alongside a big experienced man; indeed I am fairly strong; I am pretty well developed; I have done a good deal of dumb-bell practice. Indeed as I was rubbing myself down in the late twilight a few minutes ago, and as I passed my hands over my sides where the muscles lie suave and secret, I did love myself. I am thin but well skimmed over with muscle; my skin is very white and unblemished; soft, and dull with a fine pubescent bloom, not shiny like my friend's. I am very fond of myself. (30 July 1908.)

Lawrence brings in the reference to his 'friend' because earlier Blanche had hinted that he had no male friends. He counters the accusation by telling her that the 'man I have been working with in the hay is the original of my George,—lacking, alas, the other's subtlety of sympathetic discrimination which lent him his nobility.

[1] Huxley's *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 358.

[2] Pocket Edition, p. 74.

But I am very fond of my friend, and he of me'. One of the most fully rendered scenes in the whole correspondence, a really memorable evocation of happiness and vitality, occurs later in this letter and must be quoted. The autobiographical derivation of various characters in *The White Peacock* is here openly admitted.

I have worked a long fortnight in the hay, with my friends, men, three men, whom I really love, in varying degrees. There are two great fields at Greasley, running to the top of a sharp irregular hillside, with the Barons—the Vicar's garden on one side, and low, wild rushy fields on the other; with the immense grey church tower sleeping quietly, with no sound of bells, behind silver poplars; with big lime trees, murmuring and full of the scent of nectar, stretching along; with the hillside, scattered with trees, and a thick wood at the top, rising in front, and the white road climbing up it, with little carts creeping along to Nottingham, or a motor occasionally flashing down in a cloud of dust; and, far away, from the brow of the top field you can see the viaduct spanning the blue valley, and beyond that, the purple gloom of Ilkeston. From morning till night I have worked in the fields, when the willows have glittered like hammered steel in the morning; till evening when the yellow atmosphere seemed thick and palpable with dense sunshine at evening. You might have found me crawling from side to side on the horse-rake, bending, then a jingle as the tines fell behind the winrow; you might have heard the whirr of the file as I sharpen the bristling machine-knife under the hornbeam; you could have seen me high on the load, or higher on the stack, like a long mushroom in my felt hat, sweating, with my shirt neck open. In the evening, as we moved, we four men, turning the silver swaths, we sang the songs we learned at school, and then my beloved Schumann, and Giordani. One evening we slept out under the stack. As we were dropping asleep one of us jumped up with an exclamation—and I heard the whining answer of a tramp 'It's all right, young 'un, I'm only luikin' for a rough 'un, like yer sen'. It took all my friends' excellent English and refined accent to convince him that we were not of the great fraternity. Then he whined 'Well, can'e lay me dern somewheer, I shanne do no harm?' 'Tell the poor devil to lie down, and shut up,' said I across my sleepiness. It rained in the night. In the morning we found the old fellow on the other side of the stack, burrowed underneath it like a rat. His bald, grey lined head made me shiver.[1] There he lay, while we wandered round in the drizzle,

[1] Compare *The White Peacock*, Chap. III: 'The cap had fallen from his grizzled head . . . His face was pale and worn with sickness and dissipation. As he slept, his grey beard wagged, and his loose unlovely mouth moved in indistinct speech.' Cyril, whose father the tramp later turns out to be, says to George at the time, 'Do you know—it's made me feel a bit rotten'. Ada Lawrence Clarke mentions the real-life tramp incident in her *Early Life of D. H. Lawrence* (1932). 'Bert and George', she says, 'kept to their beds after that.'

hugging our rugs under our chins, looking for dry chips. We lit a fire in a little shed, smelling strongly of horses, and made coffee in a milk tin, piling hay on the fire, and blowing it into a glowing mass, while one held the can on the end of a hayfork.

The hay is finished now. Three stacks we have got in. This week is for rest. On Saturday we go to Flamboro for a fortnight. To-day—Bank Holiday, we are having a picnic at Beauvale Abbey—not far away. Mother and the weary will drive. Alice Gall is going—Emily—George—a fellow something like Leslie—Louie—a girl I am very fond of—a big, dark, laughing girl—do you remember her? Tomorrow we shall be in the fields again, pulling and finishing the stacks; Louie, Emily, and George will be there (these are not their proper names, and the people are not like the fictions)—we shall have some fun; Wednesday we shall walk to Codnor Castle—we shall be out all day, returning to the Haggs (a farm, the home of my friends)—where, in the low parlour, I shall read Verlaine to the girls (in French—the nut-brown eyes of Louie will laugh and scold me; the soft dark eyes of Emily will look at me, pensive, doubtful—not quite sure what I mean)—and perhaps I'll read Whitman; we shall walk arm in arm through the woods home in the moonlight. Thursday we have a party at home, when we sing; we learn then our songs, our Schumann, Giordani, Schubert and the song classics; we shall play bridge and be jolly. Friday is left for packing, and for escorting Louie to the station; Saturday we go to Flamboro. A good week, eh? (30 July 1908.)

There were no such 'good weeks' once he had started teaching and this may explain why in the first months at Croydon he began to write to Blanche Jennings about the books he was reading and his literary tastes generally. The literary references in the Eastwood letters—to Rossetti, Carlyle, Meredith, Whitman—are brought in incidentally. Now he wants his correspondent to share his own enthusiasms, especially for some modern English writers and for certain major nineteenth-century English, French and Russian novelists. Two of his favourite novels, he tells her on 4 November 1908, are *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*. He also admires Thackeray and—in spite of her intrusive preaching—George Eliot (22 November 1908)—indeed his discussion of the contrast between the 'stallion' strength of Adam Bede (which in this case he did not admire because he saw it as a typical woman novelist's creation) and the frailty of the cripple, Philip Wakem, in *The Mill on the Floss* (4 November 1908), suggests that his reading of her novels helped to shape one of his life-long themes. Foreign

novelists whom he especially praised were Tolstoy and Balzac. Early in November he had ordered for Blanche Jennings—'in memory of *Laetitia*'—an Everyman Library copy of *Eugénie Grandet*, 'one of the finest novels out of the heart of a man', and in two letters written soon afterwards he praises Balzac's art enthusiastically.

I consider the book as perfect a novel as I have ever read. It is wonderfully concentrated; there is nothing superfluous, nothing out of place. The book has that wonderful feeling of inevitableness which is characteristic of the best French novels. It is rather astonishing that we, the cold English, should have to go to the fleshy French for level-headed, fair unrelenting realism. Can you find a grain of sentimentality in Eugénie? Can you find a touch of melodrama, or caricature, or flippancy? It is all of tremendous earnestness, more serious than all the profundities of German thinkers, more affecting than all English bathos. It makes me drop my head and sit silent. Balzac can lay bare the living body of the great Life better than anybody in the world . . . Balzac is magnificent and supreme. (11 November 1908.)

In spite of this eulogy Blanche Jennings continued to have reservations about *Eugénie Grandet*. From Lawrence's letter of 15 December 1908 one gathers that she objected to it as 'rather Christian' and that she actively disliked Balzac's 'gush about the kiss'[1]—this was her answer to Lawrence's challenge to find even 'one grain of sentimentality' in the book. Lawrence wrestles with her hardness of heart in a characteristic sermon.

Think—if you kissed a man on the mouth—what it would mean to you. I have kissed dozens of girls—on the cheek—never on the mouth—I could not. Such a touch is the connection between the vigorous flow of two lives. Like a positive electricity, a current of creative life runs through two persons, and they are instinct with the same life force—the same vitality—the same I know not what—when they kiss on the mouth—when they kiss as lovers do. Come to think of it and it is exceedingly rare that two people participate in entirely the same sensation and emotion; but they do when they kiss as lovers, I am sure. Then a certain life-current passes through them which changes them forever; another such effect is produced in a mother by the continued soft touchings of her baby. Somehow, I think we come into knowledge (unconscious) of the most vital parts of the cosmos through touching things . . . I know my phraseology is vague and impossible. But there must be some great purposeful impulses impelling through everything to move it and work it to an end. The

[1] *Eugénie Grandet*, Chap. IX.

orld says you feel the press of these impulses, you recognise them in know-dge—science—but I, joining hands with the artists, declare that also and upremely the sympathy with and submission to the great impulses comes rough *feeling*—indescribable—and, I think, unknowable. There is something f this idea behind Balzac's homily on the kiss, I think. (15 December 1908.)

Balzac might have been surprised by the significance found in his homily', but we are grateful that Blanche Jennings's reaction timulated Lawrence to draw out in this way his own ideas.

By the following spring it is apparent that Lawrence's personal hilosophy—his mystique of sex is already formulating itself in the December Balzac letter—is beginning to warp his aesthetic judge-ments. The overestimate of Greiffenhagen is now seen to be ymptomatic. In the letter of 8 May 1909 which savages Blanche nnings for her narrowness, 'ethic-intellectualism' and supposed esemblance to J. M. Robertson, he goes on:

He (i.e. J. M. Robertson) is a poor fool . . . he's an arrant ass to declare *Crime nd Punishment* the great book—it is a tract, a treatise, a pamphlet compared ith Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* or *War and Peace*.

He abuses her for reading 'what's not worth reading of Wells; *War of the Worlds* and such like arrant rot':

ead *Kipps*, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, and read, read *Tono-Bungay*, it is a great book.

Two months before, on 6 March 1909, he had urged *Tono-Bungay* n her as one of the best novels he had read for years.[1] Wells, he elt, told the truth, in spite of being a pessimist and in spite of his ack of some of the essential qualities of the true artist. Towards he end of the year he was recommending, rather more perfunc-orily, Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale* and Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* (1 November 1909). In the same letter he re-ers to verses by Rachel Annand Taylor, which had appeared in the October issue of *The English Review*, as 'exceedingly good', so hat with Alfred Douglas (he 'has some lovely verses; he is ffected deeply by the new French poets, and has caught their eautiful touch') and W. H. Davies (whose poems about 'rain—nd leaves—and robins—are delightful') she is among the few

[1] Lawrence read *Tono-Bungay* as it was serialized in *The English Review* between December 1908 and March 1909.

modern poets approved of in the letters. In the letter of 20 January 1909 which contains these *aperçus* Lawrence declares once again that A. E. Housman is 'rotten' and dismisses Yeats as 'vapourish' and 'too thin'. He has been reading Arthur Machen and thinking about his remark that the touchstone of art is ecstasy.

> But 'ecstasy' leads to so much vapour of words, till we are blind with coloured wordiness. But I say, all mysteries and possibilities lie in things and happenings, so give us the things and happenings, and try just to show the flush of mystery in them . . .

These letters themselves show how brilliantly Lawrence could write when he followed his own advice and gave us 'the things and happenings'. Sitting out-of-doors under the combined shade of an elder tree and a lilac bush in June 1908, and mugging up facts for his exams, he observes the small lozenges of light sliding round his pencil. Details as pictorially apt appear again and again. Passages such as the long description, already quoted, of working in the hayfields at Greasley with his friends, the account of his London rambles through Richmond Park and over Wimbledon Common (in a letter of 6 March 1909 that reflects the mood of some of the London scenes in the third part of *The White Peacock*), the record of a day's outing to Rottingdean and Brighton by bicycle in May 1909—these stick in the mind because of their vivid notation. 'The sun has soaked through my shut eyelids into my eyes, and I am giddy still,' he tells Blanche Jennings as he scribbles down his impressions of a glittering May afternoon on the open shore at Brighton. He records the wet chalky sand, the tossing wind, and the three lonely shrimpers 'pushing their great nets before them, stopping, picking out little objects, and moving on again through the marvellous green light . . .' (8 May 1909). It is strange to compare the ease of this kind of writing with the strain and false thumping emphasis of the emotional Greiffenhagen passages in *The White Peacock*, particularly when we realise that the two sorts of effect can be identified in all his novels, right down to the time of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. These letters to Blanche Jennings show among other things how much of Lawrence was there from the beginning.

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Correspondence

Professor Richard Nickson writes:

'Professor Sutherland quoted in his article "Robert South" (*AREL.*, I, 1, Jan. 1960) among South's "most memorable observations" in the *Collected Sermons* (1692):

Nobody is so weak but he is strong enough to bear the misfortunes that he does not feel.

Old folks love mightily to give good advice, because this makes them some sort of amends for being incapable now of setting ill examples.

But do these not derive from Rochefoucauld's Maxims 19 and 93:

Nous avons tous assez de force pour supporter les maux d'autrui.

Les Viellards aiment à donner de bons préceptes, pour se consoler de n'être plus en état de donner de mauvais exemples.

These were included in *Réflexions ou sentences et maximes morales*, published in 1665 (seven years after he had begun writing; he died in 1680)—about the time Robert South received the degree of D.D. from Oxford.'

Professor Sutherland replies:

'Professor Nickson must certainly be right. (I have already received two other letters pointing out South's debt to Rochefoucauld.) I chose those two quotations out of a large number that I had noted, and I obviously chose unluckily. I owe your readers an apology, but I still think the two epigrams are very like South.'

It is intended to offer comment on various literary and critical Journals produced in the Commonwealth and the Editor would be pleased to receive copies of Journals whose Editors would wish mention to be made of them in this series of articles.

Notes on Contributors

EARLE BIRNEY, F.R.S.C., is Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He has published four books of poetry and two novels, as well as editing anthologies. He is at present working on *Essays in Chaucer's Irony*.

T. H. JONES, a graduate of the University of Wales, is a Lecturer in English at Newcastle University College, New South Wales, who formerly lectured at the Portsmouth Dockyard Technical College. He has published various critical articles and stories, and two volumes of poetry, *The Enemy in the Heart* (1957) and *Songs of a Mad Prince* (1960). He is at present working on Melville.

PETER URE was recently appointed Joseph Cowen Professor of English at King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, in the University of Durham, where he was previously Senior Lecturer (1959–60) and Lecturer (1947–58). He has published a book on Yeats, an anthology of seventeenth-century prose, an edition of Eachard's first Dialogue against Hobbes, and has edited *Richard II* for the Arden Shakespeare. He is at present editing Shakespeare's and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

E. M. W. TILLYARD, who has recently ceased to be Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, has been associated with English studies at Cambridge University since 1919. He has written on Milton, the Elizabethan world picture, Shakespeare, the English epic with its classical and European background and its extension into the English novel, and on the history of English Studies at Cambridge.

HELEN DARBISHIRE, C.B.E., formerly Principal of Somerville College, and University Lecturer in English Literature, Oxford (1926–31), has published editions of the Poetical Works of Milton and Wordsworth, is Chairman of the Trustees of Dove Cottage, and now lives in Grasmere.

NORMAN MACCAIG read Classics at the University of Edinburgh and has since been a schoolmaster. He has published four books of poems, *Far Cry*, *The Inward Eye*, *Riding Lights*, and *The Sinai Sort* as well as an anthology of contemporary Scottish poetry. His latest book of verse *A Common Grace* will be published shortly.

WILLIAM EMPSON is Professor of English Literature at Sheffield University; he has held Chairs of English Literature at Tokyo, and at Peking National University as well as working with the B.B.C. His publications include *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, *Some Versions of Pastoral*, *The Structure of Complex Words*. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1955. A forthcoming book, *Milton's God*, has been announced.

KENNETH ALLOTT, Andrew Cecil Bradley Lecturer at Liverpool University, has published two volumes of verse, and edited the poems of Praed and Matthew Arnold and some of Arnold's uncollected essays. He compiled the *Penguin Book of Contemporary Verse*, was general editor of the *Pelican Book of English Prose 1550–1880* and joint editor of the Victorian volume. At present a visiting Professor in New Zealand he is working on Arnold's poetry.

MIRIAM ALLOTT is a lecturer in English Litererature at Liverpool University. She has written various essays as well as collaborating with her husband in a study of Graham Greene and in the Pelican Victorian volume. Her book *Novelists on the Novel* (1959) will be followed shortly by an essay on Mrs. Gaskell in the 'Writers and Their Work' Series. She is working on *The Tragic Sense in Fiction*.

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